

THE GOLDEN COMPANY

R. E. ROBINSON

WITH SIXTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS BY
C. S. VENKATACHALUM

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THE GOLDEN COMPANY

STORIES OF
BUDDHA ASOKA KALIDASA, PADMA
KABIR CHAITANYA, TULSI DAS, AKBAR,
NUR JAHAN, MUMTAZ MAHAL, AURANGZIB,
SIVAJI, RAM MOHUN ROY, DAYANAND, TORU
DUTT, GOPAL KRISHNA GOKHALE

BY
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I. GAUTAMA BUDDHA

TWENTY-FIVE hundred years ago, on the border between Bengal and Nepal, was born a boy who for many years was carefully guarded from a knowledge of death. The town in which he lived has long since fallen into decay, and become covered with jungle growth. But then it was a place of prosperous homes set in a lovely valley of green rice-fields and groves of stately trees. Far to the north the Himalaya snows lay like a shining wall.

His father was the King of Kapilavastu and, like Hindus of the present day, called in astrologers at the time of his son's birth. It is said that they prophesied that he would either live a life of lowly self-sacrifice by which he would deliver men from ignorance, or become a king of kings, trampling on the neck of all his enemies. Much of his childhood was lived out of doors,

where he made friends with the trees and the birds, the deer and the apes, and all the animals with which his name was afterwards linked in such beautiful legends. But whenever he saw an animal hurt or ill treated, his heart would ache with sudden pity and his eyes would fill with sudden tears. His father, noticing how sad and thoughtful he grew at the sight of suffering, feared that he might be drawn from the brilliant career he would have when in due course he himself became king. Never dreaming of the greater kingdom which his son was to win by his life of loving service, he ordered his servants to see that the boy saw and heard nothing of death or age, sorrow or pain or sickness. He was brought up in luxury and among his gay companions was led to think of life as a mere round of pleasure.

This boy who was then called Siddhartha Gautama but is now known to the world as Buddha, was still further tied to a life of ease and enjoyment by his marriage, at the age of nineteen, to his beautiful young cousin, Yasodhara. For ten happy years they lived in closest companionship and during all this time Siddhartha knew nothing of the world's ache or suffering, 'save as when sleepers roam dim seas in dreams.'

The turning point of his life came in his twenty ninth year. His charioteer, Channa who was devoted to him knew how intensely his master longed to see the world that lay beyond the sheltered circle of his life, and perhaps felt that the time had come to reveal to him the life of

which he was still so ignorant. So he drove him one day to a spot where sat an old, feeble man. Another day he showed him a man suffering from a loathsome disease, and again a corpse. In answer to the startled young man's questions Channa replied that this was the fate of all living beings. The terribleness of the knowledge that he and his sweet Yasodhara would one day become aged and hideous, and that their love must end in the blackness of death, filled him with despair and dread. Still more, the thought that countless thousands suffered and died every day made him ask what was the meaning of a life so cruel. It seemed for a time as though he was never again to know a happy hour. Then one day he saw a wandering ascetic, and was told by Channa that this man was one of many who had given up the world to spend his life in meditation. Unable longer to endure the torture of his mind, Siddhartha also resolved to give up his life of pleasure and devote himself to solving the terrible problem of existence. As he was returning home in his chariot with this thought in his mind, a messenger met him with the news that his wife had given birth to a son. 'This', he said quietly, 'is a new and strong tie that I shall have to break.'

That night he left his home. It was full of guests of the highest rank in the realm who had come to celebrate the birth of an heir. But when everyone was asleep he called his faithful Channa, who was on guard and told him to prepare his chariot. While Channa was gone he gently opened the door of the room where

Yasodhara was sleeping with their child in her arms. He longed to embrace them before going, but fearing to wake them, he tore himself away. He drove with Channa all night, and in the morning before bidding him farewell, cut off his flowing locks with his sword, took off his jewels and sent them and his horse back to his home. Soon after he met a ragged beggar, with whom he exchanged clothes.

He spent the next five years in desert wanderings and intense meditation. We may be sure that he did not waste this time in mere reverie. Years after he reminded one of his disciples that meditation was not mental laziness. Nor did he spend it in an attempt to find reasons for going on believing as he already did, for this never leads to new knowledge. India has given to the world some of the greatest of its religious truths. But these truths have always come through men who did the kind of thinking that led them to change their mind. We may well call Buddha the Man with the Open Mind, which is perhaps the greatest title that can be given to any thinker.

All this time he practised the most severe self-denial. So terrible were his fastings and penances that his fame spread 'like the sound of a great bell hung in the canopy of the skies'. At last he became so weak that one day he staggered and fell unconscious. When he recovered he asked for food and told his five companions that he was convinced that the truth would not be attained by self-mortification, but by keeping a healthy mind in a healthy body. This doctrine so hor

rified them that they at once deserted him and he was left to struggle on alone

At last he found the answer to his questions. He had come one day to the bank of a river not far from Benares and set himself down to eat under the shadow of a great peepul tree to be known from that time as the sacred Bo Tree or the tree of wisdom. All day and all night he remained under the tree in deep meditation and the truth that was afterwards to illumine the minds of millions of men and women was there revealed to him. From this experience he was called Buddha the Enlightened One.

Some day you will study his wonderful system. You will be struck by its beauty and its teaching of perfection. It owes the great hold it still has to its teaching of love to all men and to Buddha's life of utter self sacrifice.

If ever Gautama had intended to go back and succeed to his father's wealth that old ambition was gone for ever. His work in the world he now knew was to make known to men the truth he had learned at so great cost. The first to believe his teaching were his five companions. He spent the next two years with them in the Deer Park (still to be seen near Benares) gathering disciples about him and when they had learned his teaching sending them out to preach to others.

At last a message from his father turned his steps towards the home from which he had been absent for seven years. Among the first converts that he made here were his wife and little son and his half brother Ananda who greatly loved him.

Then he went forth to spend the remaining forty-five years of his life in poverty, journeying on foot up and down the Ganges valley and among the towns and villages of the Benares district, preaching the truth which men and women everywhere eagerly accepted.

At the age of eighty he died, his last day spent lying under a tree beside a river, where he talked lovingly to his disciples and comforted Ananda when he went aside to weep. His gentleness and love, united to a heroic devotion to the truth, had given him a far more complete conquest over mankind than anything his father dreamed for him.

We are filled with wonder as we see the broad shadow that the figure of Buddha has cast down the history of twenty-five centuries. Although he declared himself before his death to be only a man, the love and gratitude of Asia have refused to consider him less than a god. Although a few centuries after his death his religion was driven out of India, it has spread over the whole of eastern Asia, and to-day his worshippers number one-fourth of the population of the globe. To the people of his day he probably appeared no more than a humble, loving-hearted monk. But we know him as one of the greatest souls that ever trod this earth.



II ASOKA

ASOKA is known to us as the man who suddenly converted his kingdom to a state of warlessness. Only Akhnaton of Egypt worked a similar miracle but Asoka's experiment was on a far greater scale. Such a change in any kingdom or empire of to-day is almost unthinkable. Yet twenty two hundred years ago when Asoka ruled India it must have been at least as difficult. His success is sufficient to tell us that when the supreme crisis in his life came he took his courage in both hands and risked everything in a great moral adventure.

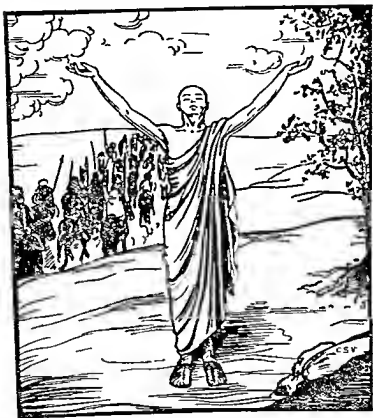
All his training seemed to point to a career exactly opposite to the one he followed. His grandfather Chandragupta of Magadha born with a genius for conquest had done what the Greek conqueror Alexander a few years before had longed to do. He had conquered one by one in rapid succession the disunited kingdoms of the land bringing almost the whole of India under his sway. Within a very short time he had built up a vast well-organized closely knit empire. The army by which he accomplished his conquests was far larger than the present-day British army in India and its organization was modelled on that of Alexander. By justice and good government Chandragupta made his subjects contented and

established an empire greater than that which was later built up by the Moguls, and almost as great as the present British Empire in India. Only within the past few years have men had a glimpse of the magnificence of his capital Pataliputra (not far from the modern Patna). The excavators have brought to light wonderful buildings and beautiful palaces which confirm the stories of Oriental splendour and a highly civilized society given by Megasthenes the Greek ambassador at Pataliputra to whom we owe almost all that we know of Chandragupta's reign.

Twenty five years intervened between the death of this king and the coming to the throne of Asoka years of which we know almost nothing except that Bindusara the father of Asoka was king. He must have continued the tradition of military greatness begun by Chandragupta for he handed on the empire intact to his son. The little Asoka therefore was probably given advantages of which any prince in any age might well be proud. Everything that learning, refinement and wealth could supply must have gone to his training. His high destiny must have been kept always before his mind.

It was possible for the young prince to grow in one of two ways. He might yield to the atmosphere of flattery and adulation which is found in every court and live only to assert his authority over others—a process which must inevitably result in hardness and selfishness. Or he might screen the sensitiveness of his heart from the hardening influence of the world.

and open it to the spirit of love and humility. The one hint that we have as to the way in which this boy chose to grow is that when he came to the



throne, the royal titles he assumed for himself, which doubtless expressed the secret ambition of his heart, were *devānam piya*, 'dear to the gods', and *piyadasi*, 'of gracious men'. Through the

years in which so many corrupting influences were at work to spoil him, he evidently kept the tenderness the purity, and the gentleness which we treasure in his recorded words

He was probably not more than twenty when he came to the throne, and for eleven years he seems to have ruled much as his father and grandfather had done. Then came the crisis which changed his whole life and the life of his kingdom

It would be a mistake to think of this as the only experience of its kind. An act which seems sudden and unexpected in a man's life has roots which go far back into his boyhood and childhood. Searching back we find that something has for long been troubling him, making him question the truth of what he has been taught. A long series of choices and decisions has been making his character and preparing him to make the response that he does when the test finally comes

With Asoka we can guess that the great influence which set his mind to questioning and longing was the teaching that Buddha had given India two hundred and fifty years before. He must often have seen the yellow robed priests so gentle and kindly of manner, in the streets of Patliputra for the kingdom of Magadha had been the centre of Buddha's activities and continued to be that of his followers long after his death. He must often have heard their teaching that the way of life was the way of love. One who had kept himself sensitive to the

influence of good could not but feel that it must be true that the spirit of peace and gentleness and mercy was greater than the spirit of hate and violence and cruelty

The great and unforgettable experience which split Asoka's life into two was the destruction of life that occurred in his conquest of Kalinga. This was a province lying to the south of his empire comprising the modern district of Vizagapatnam and Ganjam. Following the example of his grandfather he seems to have decided to annex it to his empire. But he had not reckoned on the appalling amount of misery which this conquest would entail. Years after, he recorded in brief but significant words his experience in one of his Rock Edicts.

Kalinga was conquered by His Sacred and Gracious Majesty the King when he had been consecrated eight years. [The consecration ceremony was held three years after he ascended the throne.] One hundred and fifty thousand persons were thence carried away captive one hundred thousand were slain and many times that number perished.

'Directly after the annexation of Kalinga began His Sacred Majesty's zealous protection of the Law of Piety (or Duty) his love of that Law and his giving instruction in that Law (dharma). Thus arose His Majesty's remorse for having conquered Kalinga because the conquest of a country previously unconquered involved the slaughter death and carrying away captive of the people. This is a matter of profound sorrow and regret to His Sacred Majesty.

'In His Majesty's eyes the chief conquest is that of the Law. For the conquest thus made is full of pleasure. Yet the pleasure produced thereby is a small thing for His Majesty regards as fruitful only that which concerns the other world. And His Majesty has issued this edict in order that his sons and grandsons may not regard it as their duty to undertake new ways of aggression. If perchance they should be involved in war, they should take pleasure in the exercise of patience and gentleness towards their foes, always remembering that the only true conquest is that of Religion. For that alone avails in this world and the next. Let all joy be in effort, for that alone brings happiness in this world and the next.

Asoka was evidently a man who was moved, and deeply moved, by the suffering of others. But his later life proved that it was not only the emotion of horror that caused him to take the step he did. Long and careful thinking had focussed his desires and fixed his purpose, so that no wavering or indecision troubled him thereafter. Through all the years that preceded this crisis he must have been trying to find the key to life, trying first position, then wealth, then power, then learning, but finding that none of them fitted. He was sure that life held for him something satisfying and beautiful and he found it at last in love. His remorse at the cruelty of all that had happened in Kalinga was healed by a love which flowed from his heart to the whole world, and which led to his resolve never again

to cause hurt to any living creature. The resolve was taken with apparent suddenness though there had been so long a preparation for it. A runner takes a sudden leap though he has had a run before the leap. One thing that this experience taught Asoka was that a time of great moral victory is a time of clarified vision. From this time he held the key to the riddle of life. Something within him came to rest. His whole life thereafter breathed the spirit of that love and peace which pass all understanding.

If we think it was easy for Asoka to make and keep the resolve he did we greatly under-estimate the force of the opposition he overcame. Praise must have been as unpopular in that day as in this. There were plenty to scoff at the idea of giving up the greatest army in the world out of sheer idealism. There were plenty to sneer at the adoption of a policy of kindness and reconciliation and forgiveness. There were many counsellors to urge that if he must disarm let him disarm only a little. Asoka knew that his way was not the road to popularity. But he realized that it would enable him to experience life in a new spirit and all his later life bears witness how satisfying he found it. He was a hero in that most difficult realm of heroism the realm of the spirit. With his new knowledge of the key to life he looked upon the following of the law of love as a great adventure upon which he was willing to stake his empire and his life. For its sake he was willing to run tremendous risks. He gave up a certainty for an uncertainty.

and the curious and encouraging result was that he found what he sought. He was strangely content, because in being ready to lose his empire he had saved his soul.

Even more than the prejudice against pacifism entered into the opposition that Asoka had to face. His conversion involved the adoption of another faith—Buddhism. As soon as his resolve to change the manner of his rule was made, he sent for the famous scholar, Upagupta, and under his teaching formally adopted Buddhism, becoming a lay monk. What Asoka did could have been accomplished only by a man of rare spiritual power. In our own day it takes unusual moral strength to think, as is sometimes necessary, not with one's country, but against it. The greatness of Asoka's character is in his ability to stand alone and in the extent to which he changed men's ideas.

How completely Asoka's kingdom was turned upside down is indicated by the extraordinary principles he now chose to live by. He had come through an experience fraught through and through with living pain. In a blinding flash he had learned that war was hate, and in his heart he found no room for hate. He had seen that the resentment bred by war was a spiritual degradation, a de-humanizing thing, and he hastened to free himself from its defiling touch. He had found that war was death, and his one passion now was to make life for others a thing of hope and beauty.

He saw that the world about him was faulty, and

he made it an arena for high spiritual endeavour. In the ideal kingdom of his vision he saw that what really mattered was the quality of life. A life outwardly splendid with no corresponding inner enjoyment and satisfaction was to him no life at all. It was a thing uninteresting, poor and empty. His first desire for his subjects was that they be happy and free. He wished them to create for themselves an abundant, interesting and vivid life that would feed the imagination, for chiefly by the imagination, he knew, men were trained to know what to love and hate, how to choose right or wrong, how to spur their dull souls to high desire.

It is worth remembering that all the fine idealism of Asoka would have accomplished nothing if he had not found a certain measure of responsiveness in his people. Opposition he must have found, for selfishness exists in every age and nation. But if we think of culture in terms of patience, tolerance, gentleness and self-control, we must conclude that the India of his day, as reflected in the words of his edicts, had a very high standard of civilization and morality.

There is good reason to believe that education was widespread in Asoka's time, and that the country had reached a very high standard of comfort and prosperity. As we know to-day, war and peace are dependent on economic conditions, which show their effects in liking or antipathy, sympathy or intolerance. The era of good-will of this reign must have been founded on widespread comfort and contentment.

The system of government and the standard of duty that Asoka set for himself and his officials show that he regarded the State as existing for man, not man for the State. The business of government was to preserve order, but to preserve it only so as to give the largest possible freedom for expression of life. The rights of the poorest and lowliest were as scrupulously safeguarded as those of the highest and most influential. The people who called out his special sympathy were the aboriginal tribes living in the forests and mountains. It is said that the poor savages had been looked upon as something less than animals, and treated with cruelty and contempt. But Asoka regarded them as his children, and the edicts that he wrote for them reveal a beautiful sense of the worth of all human life.

Not only to men, but to all living beings the heart of this king went out in tenderness. He put an end to all unnecessary suffering and destruction of animals, established hospitals for them, and prohibited animal sacrifice at his capital.

He taught that the ideal life was love in all its forms, in family life and community life. Especially did he dwell in his later years on tolerance towards those of other religions. With a flaming zeal for his own new-found faith he combined a whole-souled respect and sympathy for the religious beliefs of others. He would have understood the noble remark, 'I wholly disapprove of what you say, and will defend to the death your right to say it.'

Asoka was a king in the highest sense. For twenty-eight years after his great experience he carried the burden of an immense empire, not only regulating the affairs of State, but so controlling the religious and domestic life of his subjects as to put his personal impress on every part of his kingdom.

He was also an artist in the highest sense. There was room for beauty as well as use in his life, and fabulous stories are told of the number of buildings erected by him, and wonder of his craftsmanship. Remembering that he was the first in India to build in stone, we find the fragments of his work that have come down to us remarkable for their perfection and beauty. Those who have seen at Sarnath the noble capital of the pillar crowned by its massive lions will feel the truth of Sir John Marshall's opinion, that they are masterpieces in both style and technique—'the finest carvings, indeed, that India has yet produced and unsurpassed, I venture to think, by anything of their kind in the ancient world.' Unfortunately the magnificent palaces and other buildings which he erected have disappeared. Only a few of the stupas, or great cupolas, of which he is said to have built in every part of the country a great number as memorials to Buddha, survive.

But the most valuable reminders of Asoka that we have are the rock, or pillar, edicts. From time to time he published to his subjects in one part or another of his empire, the great principles of his faith, which he caused to be inscribed upon rocks or pillars erected for this

purpose About thirty of these pillars have been found, some inscribed, some uninscribed They are of fine sandstone, and polished with a skill unknown to modern sculptors The feat of transporting them from the spot where they were quarried to places hundreds of miles distant is a fascinating story in itself But their most precious interest to us lies in the inscriptions or royal sermons which are the principal records we possess of Asoka's life and reign Fourteen of these edicts have been found, and (since they are in the vernacular) they tell us how large a number of his subjects were probably able to read, how great was the extent of his kingdom, and how widely he sent out his messengers to various parts of the world But chiefly they reveal to us the character of the man who caused them to be written We see in this great but humble hearted king one whose whole life was occupied in strenuous warfare against everything in the world that was insensitive, cruel, uncivilized and wicked He shows a refinement of nature a gentleness of conscience, and a sense of the sanctity of all life as lovely as it is rare It is no wonder that Mr H G Wells in summing up this remarkable life says

'He was the first monarch to make an attempt to educate his people in a common view of the ends and way of life He is the only military monarch on record who abandoned warfare after victory For eight and twenty years he sanely worked for the real needs of men Amidst the tens of thousands of names of monarchs that

crowd the columns of history—their majesties and graciousnesses and serenities and royal highnesses and the like—the name of Asoka shines, and shines almost alone, a star.

But great as Asoka was as a monarch, he was at least equally great as a missionary. We must remember that for two and a half centuries after Buddha's death his religion was confined to North India. It is entirely owing to Asoka that it is to-day one of the great world religions. So great was his eagerness and zeal that one of his biographers says, 'If we are not all Buddhists, it was not Asoka's fault.' He himself journeyed throughout the country as a preacher, changing camp no fewer than two hundred and fifty six times. He sent missionaries to western Asia, eastern Europe and north Africa, but apparently nothing was accomplished in those regions. His most important success was in Ceylon for it was from there that Buddhism spread to Burma, and some centuries later to Siam. Through Tibet and Central Asia other missionaries sent by Asoka travelled to China, laying the foundations of Buddhism in those countries. Some centuries later the faith was carried from China to Korea and thence to Japan.

To Asoka, also Buddhism owes its characteristic of being 'at once the most intensely missionary in the world, and the most tolerant.' Understanding that ideas were more penetrating and powerful than any army, he set out to conquer the world not by the sword, but by reason and persuasion. The Buddhist spirit of freedom and

love its enmity to caste, social injustice, war, sloth and greed, its call to simplicity of life and human service, united with the crusading zeal of those who carried the message, stirred the imagination and won the eager acceptance of multitudes of men

Although in India itself Buddhism at no time superseded Brahminism, it existed side by side with it for a thousand years. It was gradually suppressed not, however, without leaving its indelible impress upon Hinduism. While most of the things that represent Asoka's achievements on the material side have perished the things of the spirit—his courage and high hearted idealism his gracious humanity and serene faith—remain an inspiration to everyone who seriously cares for the good, the true and the beautiful

III. KALIDASA

IT was in the Golden Age that the fortunate Kalidasa was born. It was an age rich in all the things that went to make his fresh and wonder-loving spirit. The very land in which he lived was the same in which Rama and Arjuna had once walked, and in which the friendly wolves and lions, goats and elephants, woodpeckers and monkeys, turtles and deer of the Jataka tales had experienced their adventures. On festival days, the streets of his town would throb with the drum-beat and the high notes of flutes and pipes, the crowds would flame into gorgeous colour so that they resembled nothing so much as a huge moving flower-garden, and before his eyes would be enacted scenes from the forest of Ayodhya or the battlefields of Indraprasta. He lived in an enchanted land filled with gods and kings, queens and heroines, sprites and goblins, who were probably as real to him as the men and women of his everyday world.

What were the things that fed this boy's spirit? Did he learn his craft from others, or was his genius heaven-sent? Did he gain his knowledge of men and life in circumstances of poverty or luxury? Did Life, before giving him the shining reality of his dream, deal him a stroke on the heart, as she is said to do to those whom she would bless, with something that cut cruel

and deep, something that made him weep? So thick does the dust of fifteen centuries lie upon the life of Kalidasa, that only by inference can we answer these questions

We know that he lived during the reign of Vikramaditya. Although scholars are divided between three kings of that name, the majority consider that Kalidasa was a contemporary of Vikramaditya of Ujjain, who reigned in the fourth century. The fourth to the eighth centuries are known as a golden age in Indian literature. The country, under the rule of wise kings enjoyed that peace and good government which are a condition of culture and creative work. The life of town and country described by Kalidasa reflects an ideal age, an age which gave his greatness its chance.

That he was brought up in fairly comfortable circumstances is an inference from the fact that the greatest works of art are the product of abundance and leisure when men are so freed from the struggle for existence as to be able to express themselves in the creation of beautiful works. That he was not, on the other hand, exposed to the corruption which comfort and luxury work in one, we may take as certain. Nor was he tempted by thoughts of prosperity and fame to do anything less than his best.

Around him like bees around honey, must have gathered the children of his town. And before their eyes he made those

Bright iridescent bubbles children blow
Where swims a shining world in brief array,
A flower of gossamer from a pipe of clay

It may be that here, in some curving, grassy space, he set his boy playmates to acting in an outdoor theatre, or that his Brahmin teacher organized one of the performances which even to this day are a favourite village pastime. No scenery would be needed. The only screen for the actors before their turn came would be



a white or coloured shawl held up before them. With such simple apparatus the preparations were complete. Even to day, when plays are given in halls and theatres, only the simplest setting is used, though the costumes are often magnificent.

Kalidasa, or another Brahmin boy from among the young actors (for the Indian stage does not

even yet permit women actors), would move forward, his feet shuffling along the road in time to the drum-beat. His high head-dress, covered with tinsel and coloured glass would sparkle in the light. With hands held before him, palms towards the audience, he would recite the prayer of invocation with which every Hindu play must begin.

Then the manager would appear with an actor, and in dialogue with him would narrate events leading up to the play, and then with an abrupt exclamation announce the appearance of some of the other actors. A favourite character of every play, called the Vidushaka, corresponded to the buffoon or fool of Western plays. Still another, a Vita, was an attendant of the hero as a poet, musician and singer.

It might be supposed that a play with no assistance from stage setting or scenery would be a dull affair to the spectators. But anyone who has watched them at a Hindu play knows that this is far from being the case. The imagination of the people is still as rich and vivid as that of the people in Shakespeare's day, for whom a board on which was painted the name of a place was sufficient. Add to this that the number of Hindu plays is extremely small, and the plots are familiar to all. Although the drama was a highly-developed art in India fourteen or fifteen centuries earlier than in western Europe, only about fifty plays of any literary value are in existence, and those are all written in a dead language, Sanskrit. (The Bengali plays of

Rabindranath Tagore are the single exception.) This points to the fact that they were written only for a small class of the most highly cultivated people, and were performed only on rare occasions. They are still given only occasionally, but nowadays their language is the local vernacular, into which they have been translated from the Sanskrit. At such a play, the audience, as soon as the chief character appears, recognizes him as Krishna or Rama or Harish-chandra, as the case may be, and then knows all the others. It has known them a long time, and thoroughly. At once it sees them with their proper background, a background not visible, but none the less present to their minds. Men and women who are supposed to have lived thousands of years ago, *rishis* and messengers of the gods, kings and queens, cowherds and foresters, seem almost to rub shoulders with them. The play goes on for hours, sometimes for successive days, but it never wearies the audience.

Some such performance as these of modern days must have been those in which Kalidasa took part, except that the plays of his day were probably acted in Sanskrit. When Sanskrit ceased to be the spoken language of the country, if indeed it ever was so used, we have no means of knowing. But it has always been the language of religion. Since Hindu plays, by the laws of the theatre, must always take their subjects from mythology, they must be written in the language of the priests. Even an amateur performance must observe certain rules of the theatre, and one

of these was that, while speeches of the demi-gods and men in the play must be in Sanskrit, those of the other characters, the women and common people, were in Prakrit, a dialect from the Sanskrit, supposed to have been at one time the language of common life. Sometimes several Prakrit dialects would be used in one play by different classes and ranks of people. Another rule was that, whatever misfortune might attend the hero or heroine, the play must end happily. There are therefore no tragedies, in the technical sense, in the Indian drama.

These and other laws of the Hindu theatre may seem to have limited the art of playwriting in an artificial way, just as the laws governing the writing of poetry (which also, until very recent times, had always to be written in Sanskrit) may have seemed to cramp expression. But in reality they formed a framework within which the writer could work more easily. Kalidasa must first have been conscious only of the sensuous beauty of the poems, and to have seen the plays only as a dazzling stream of broad, beautiful, enchanting life, full of romantic adventures. Later their artistic form must have made its impression on his sensitive mind, and he must have set himself to master the rules of art so that he might use them to make more intense the expression of his vision.

Did he ever, as he listened to, or recited, some great passage, kindle at the thought, 'Some day my plays will be the favourite dramas of India, and my poems the greatest in her literature?'

Probably not, for greatness, as we know, does not come as a result of aiming directly at greatness. Doubtless he wrote his poems and plays, when he came to manhood, from the same motive from which, as a boy, he had told his marvellous tales—to amuse the neighbours. But because he illumined what he wrote with the light of that beauty which is at the very heart of his race, he made Kalidasa 'one of the few, the immortal names'

It would have been strange if Kalidasa had turned to any other profession. He had all the makings of a craftsman in letters. His eye singled out like a prism all the rich, glowing tints of life's colours, and his brain, receiving them as if it had been a palette translated them into descriptions of jewel-like beauty. Nothing escaped his observant eye. If, like Hawthorne, he kept note books of the sights and sounds that greeted him each day in order that he might make use of them in his poems we would expect to find them crammed with descriptions of the crane, the swan, the peacock, the koil, the dove the chacrivaca or Brahminy goose, the sarica or grackle, and the parrot, of the elephant, the musk deer and the antelope, of the blossoms of the padma or lotus, the chuda the mandara, the asoca, the cestra, the twining madhavi, the surnivaca or oleander, of fragrant fields and of mountains 'whose sides are silvered with eternal snow'. These words are taken at random from one of his shorter poems. But instead of being mere lists of names, they are used in a rich embroi-

dery of imagery Kalidasa must have given himself up to a most loving and minute study of nature to be rewarded with so rich a knowledge.

He had, too a beauty-loving mind, which drew from the common, uninteresting surface of life the luminous mysterious loveliness that lay beneath. His nymphs and maidens, his huntsmen, his ascetics, his kings and clowns, all live in a world which he has enriched for us by the atmosphere of enchantment he has woven around it. It is the same golden light in which Shakespeare paints the Forest of Arden. There is a freshness of feeling as well as a beautiful accuracy in the scenes that Kalidasa describes. A thicket in the forest near the home of ascetics is painted for us with such surprising vividness that we seem actually to see the lofty trees hung with their drapery of fresh green vines, to hear the tumultuous song birds and to smell the fragrance of the blossom laden air.

When we test the characters of Kalidasa by the question, 'Are they alive?' they meet it perfectly. True, they are surrounded with the same ideal, romantic atmosphere in which Kalidasa clothes his landscape. But they are living, breathing, moving beings. Their feelings of affection and loyalty, of joy and sadness, of love and renunciation are depicted with such truthfulness as to make us feel that Kalidasa 'has searched his own heart and found the jewel Sincerity.'

Kalidasa has been fortunate in his translators, at any rate his English translators, who have

given us so delicate and exquisite an impression of his art. It is an art so perfect that it seems to achieve all its grace and charm without effort. His style has simplicity and ease, but it is a polished ease. We feel that we are in the presence of a master-craftsman. Kalidasa apparently set himself to the work of creating beauty for his neighbours—he could never have dreamed how wide a circle of readers he would one day have—but it was work for which he trained himself in so imperial a manner that it proved in the end, we must believe, not a mere exercise in composition, but the building of his own character in human sympathy and spiritual sweetness.

To Kalidasa can be assigned with certainty several poems which take rank among the greatest in Indian literature. These he is supposed to have written in his youth. The best known of them is *Meghaduta*, or Cloud Messenger. In this a cloud is personified and converted into the messenger whom a banished Yaksha, or demi-god, sends with a message to his wife in the Himalayas. The picture of the valleys, mountains, cities and forests over which the cloud passes brings before us northern India in all its varied beauty.

In his maturer years Kalidasa wrote three dramas, two of them being *Urvasi Won by Valour* and *Malavika and Agnimitra*, dealing respectively with the loves of King Pururavas and King Agnimitra. The third is *Shakuntala*, regarded as the greatest and most artistic of all Indian plays.

Like Shakespeare, Kalidasa did not trouble to invent his plots, but took them ready-made. His originality lay in the creation of his characters, chiefly of Shakuntala herself—Shakuntala who, with her pretty maternal care of her pets and flowers, her wide eyed, fawn-like gaze, and wistful grace, shines with a beauty that is not of this world.

The first knowledge that reached Europe of the Hindu drama was through the English translation of *Shakuntala*, by Sir William Jones, about a hundred years ago. Some of the enthusiasm which the scholars of Europe felt when they first saw this new planet of dramatic literature 'swim into their ken' found expression in Goethe's exquisite lines

Wouldst thou the young year's blossom and the fruit
of its decline

And all by which the soul is charmed, enraptured, fed?
Wouldst thou the earth and heaven in one sole name
combine?

I name, thee, O Shakuntala, and all at once is said

How many years Kalidasa lived is as unknown to us as the other facts of his life. What we do know and feel is a personality with an exquisite sense of awe and love and beauty which still lives before us on his pages

IV PADMANI

IN the island of Ceylon that place of legend and romance there lived more than six hundred years ago a little maid the fame of whose beauty was carried to distant parts of India. Her very name Padmani was reserved only for those whose grace and loveliness set them above all others of their sex. There is little doubt that she often heard her mother tell the story of Sita the beloved wife of Rama who had been carried away by a *rakshasa* from their forest near Ayodhya to this very island of Ceylon and that again and again her little heart had thrilled at the thought of the bravery and faithfulness of that lovely queen. But she could not have guessed that she was one day to be put to a more terrible test than Sita's and to endure a martyrdom that would set a new record for human fortitude.

In some the gift of beauty produces only vanity killing all the fine idealism of youth. But in this girl was the divine fire of passion for heroic giving and she refused to let it be smothered. What influences moulded her life we are not told. But from the store of moral resources which she had at her command in later life it is evident that she was finely disciplined and that she grew in beauty of soul as well as of face and form.

Her marriage, while still very young, to the brave Rana of Chitor, Bhim Singh, took her far away from her beloved childhood home. Raj-



putana in those days was in a troubled state, owing to the ambitious designs of Ala-ud-din,

he Pathan Emperor of Delhi. He conquered one State after another, and finally arrived at the stone walls of the Red Fort of Chitor. Doubtless his love of conquest was what first took him there, but the fame of Padmani's beauty and his resolve to win her at all costs played an increasingly important part in his movements hereafter.

For a long time Ala ud din's army besieged the fort. Fights occurred from time to time when the Rajputs sallied forth from their mountain home, losses and terrible suffering were endured by both sides, but the Emperor was no nearer winning Chitor. At last he offered to raise the siege if he was given Padmani as wife. This was peremptorily refused, whereupon he again promised to leave that part of the country if he might have only a sight of her extraordinary beauty. Such an unusual proposal must have led to much debate in the council chamber, and much trepidation on the part of Padmani, when it was announced to her. On the one hand was the dread that the terrible siege would be indefinitely prolonged, on the other that at a price—a humiliating price, it is true—they might purchase freedom from this anxiety. At last, on condition that the queen should be viewed, not face to face (which would have been an insult to her and her race), but in a mirror, and that the Emperor enter the palace unguarded, his request was granted.

Relying on the faith of the Rajput King, he entered the palace alone. He was conducted to a certain room and placed before a long curtained

mirror. At a signal the curtain was withdrawn and as though reflected in a silver pool he saw before him a slim, lightly poised figure, and a beautiful, grave face of loveliness beyond belief.

Then Rani Bhim Singh led him from the palace, and, unwilling to be outdone by him in confidence, accompanied him to the foot of the fortress. But the Pathan Emperor, wily of nature and keeping faith only when it suited his purpose, used the Rajputs' trustfulness to trap him. For he could not get out of his mind the grave young beauty of the face that had seemed to look at him from the still, clear depths of a forest pool. Still less could he give up now the determination to make that beauty his own.

So with base treachery, he led Bhim Singh into an ambush at the foot of his own fortress, hurried him away as prisoner to his camp, and sent back word that the king would be set free only when Padmani was surrendered to him. In her despair, on first receiving this news the Rani saw no other means of freeing her husband than on the hateful terms laid down by Ala ud din. But he was to find that Padmani was more than a match for him in cleverness. On the advice of her uncle and cousin from Ceylon, who were with her at the time she caused a message to be sent, that on the day the besieger withdrew from his trenches she would be sent. And as befitted her own and his station, she would be accompanied with a large retinue of handmaids and female attendants. Two wrongs do not make a right,

and the ruse by which the Rani outwitted her husband's captor was no more honourable than that by which he had trapped him. But those rough days of warfare had another code of conduct from ours, and we must remember that Padmani's case was desperate. Besides, she had not been the aggressor. She sent into the enemy's camp no less than seven hundred litters, each containing one of the hardest warriors of Chitor, and each borne by six armed soldiers disguised as litter-bearers. These were admitted within the camp with all the decorum and privacy shown to women when travelling. A herald carried a message to Ala ud din asking that Padmani be given an opportunity to bid farewell to her husband before surrendering herself to him. This was granted, and a litter supposedly containing Padmani, was carried to Bhim Singh's tent. This gave the latter a chance to make good his escape in another litter, which was accompanied back to the fort by a small retinue, the rest remaining, as was supposed, to serve as attendants for Padmani.

When Ala ud din discovered that his captive had escaped, he was startled to find that a band of Rajput soldiers had emerged from the litters and was now rapidly following the king back to the fort. He at once ordered a pursuit, and the Pathan army overtook the devoted band, reinforced by troops from Chitor, at the outer gate of the fort. The Rajputs, by their desperate resistance, drove back the Pathans and actually forced Ala ud din to raise the siege. But they had lost

the flower of their army and so were too weak to successfully oppose the Emperor of Delhi.

Ala ud din kept through all the years of warfare in other parts of India that followed the memory of the pure grace and loveliness of the face he had that day seen in the palace of Chitor. When he next returned some years later, he fought with greater determination than before and at length secured possession of the southern part of the hill of Chitor. Bhim Singh and Padmani realised that not much longer could they hope to resist this merciless conqueror. But never they resolved would they be guilty of weak surrender. In their last meeting together they pledged themselves to eternal loyalty to each other and to Chitor.

Then began the grim attack by the Emperor's forces. Eleven of the sons of Bhim Singh in turn commanded the Rajput army and one by one they were killed in the one-sided encounter. When the turn of the twelfth son came the father insisted on his escaping to a place of safety by passing through the enemy's lines. Then he and the small band of soldiers left alive issued from the gates and hurling themselves upon the ranks of Ala ud-din were killed to a man.

At the same time to complete this tale of horror and of splendour, Padmani and the women of Chitor bravely met death by committing themselves to the awful rite of *johur*. According to this custom of the Rajputs in medieval India when there was no chance of saving the women and children from falling into the hands of the Muhammadan conquerors a huge funeral pyre

was made, and the women, old and young, with their children, flung themselves upon it. To them freedom meant more than life. Death was something to be passionately desired, since it would deliver them from a forced tyranny. And this desire created in them a strength that was not their own. To this day the Rajput bards proudly sing the tale of that day of woe, when the fair queen and thirteen thousand of the women of Chitor perished in the flames of a pyre built in a great subterranean cavern. When the Pathan Emperor at last entered the city, the smoke that had consumed them was issuing from the recesses of the cavern. If he still carried the memory of the beauty of the woman he had once been permitted to behold, it must now have been a terrible and torturing memory. The thought of her final, brave sacrifice of herself, for the sake of love and loyalty, must have pierced him with a pain sharper than any he had known.

Against all the dark horror and pity of the story, we seem to see the tenderness and courage of Padmani. She had learned the secret of renunciation, for she held luxury and comfort and life itself cheap beside honour and faith and love.

V KABIR

HE was only a poor weaver lad of Benares, yet for nearly five centuries he has made the heart of India throb with the memory of a lover's passion for God

Of scarcely any noted life lived in India do we know so little with certainty of the external details. Putting aside the mass of legend that has gathered around his name, there is nothing to tell us where or when the boy Kabir was born into what religion or caste, whether he married or where he spent the greater part of his life. 'It is hardly an exaggeration to say,' writes one of his biographers, 'that only two facts can be asserted with absolute confidence. He lived for some time at Benares, and he died at Maghar. This throws us back, therefore, on the record of his inner life, of which he has left so rich a revelation in his poems

The greatest enigma of his biographers is whether Kabir was born a Muhammadan or a Hindu. His name is Muhammadan and that he was brought up in the home of a Julaha, or Muhammadan weaver, is fairly certain. But his writings show a mind steeped in Hindu thoughts and mythology, and a knowledge of Hindu scripture and philosophy only to be gained from

a close association with Brahmin pundits. We know, too, that his mother tongue was Hindi. Perhaps, as Dr Ahmad Shah suggests, his real father was a Brahmin, who for some reason may



not have wished to acknowledge his parentage. Another influence very pronounced in his writings is that of the Sufis, or Muhammadan mystics whose doctrines Kabir may have imbibed from the wandering Moslem fakirs of whom he must

have seen many in the weavers' quarter of Benares

These two influences seem to have brought the boy at a very early age to the belief that God was not the God of any one religion or creed, but of all mankind. Everyone who thinks independently must face sooner or later the question, Shall I continue to hold my belief because I have been told to believe it, or shall I hold it because I am convinced that it is true? Every generation receives new light on questions of belief, a light which fills some with terror for fear it will mean that they will have to let go of age long beliefs and will have nothing left to cling to. Such people refuse to look at the light and so keep their beliefs in all honesty, but keep them also in all ignorance. But if every one had stuck to the beliefs of his forefathers, the whole human race would still be living amid savage superstitions.

The other quality of mind is represented by people who can find no comfort except in believing facts. They must know the truth, even if it hurts. And seeking for the truth is a life-long pursuit. It is not something revealed all at once, but found little by little, by patient and laborious search. It is always moving before us, calling to our souls as clearly as God's love calls, and it is resisted only by mental apathy.

It was because the boy Kabir's heart was so fully fixed upon God that he was able to get past all ceremonies, forms, creeds, to the reality beyond them. He might have said, with Browning,

O servant, where dost thou seek Me?

Lo! I am beside thee.

I am neither in temple nor in mosque:

I am neither in Kaaba nor in Kailash:

Neither am I in rites and ceremonies, nor in Yoga and renunciation.

If thou art a true seeker, thou shalt at once see Me: thou shalt meet Me in a moment of time.

Kabir says, 'O Sadhu! God is the breath of all breath.'

It is needless to ask of a saint the caste to which he belongs,

For the priest, the warrior, the tradesman, and all the thirty-six castes, alike are seeking for God.

It is but folly to ask what the caste of a saint may be:

The barber has sought God, the washerwoman, and the carpenter—

Even Raidas was a seeker after God.

The Rishi Swapacha was a tanner by caste.

Hindus and Moslems alike have achieved that *Erk*, where remains no mark of distinction

But one with ideas so free and unconventional never has an easy time in this world. In Kabir's age, as now, heresy hunters were busy, and when, as a mere boy, he refused to be bound by the limitations of either Hinduism or Muhammadanism, he offended the followers of both religions. It was inevitable that orthodoxy would clash with such simplicity and directness as Kabir felt.

In later life, we read more than once of his being brought by his enemies before the Emperor Sikander Lodi, with bitter charges against his freedom of belief, and the demand that he should be put to death. If the Emperor had been a bigot, there is little doubt but that Kabir would have been obliged to pay with his life for his

liberal ideas, but fortunately, the ruler was a man of culture and broad views.

He became according to one of the best attested traditions of his life, a disciple of Ramananda, one of the most spiritual *gurus* of his time. It was not the theology of Ramananda that attracted him but the conviction that he lived nearer to God than any man he knew. Realising the impossibility of a Hindu accepting a Muhammadan as his *chela* he is said to have obtained admission to the circle of the famous teacher's disciples by a ruse. Knowing Ramananda's habit of going down to the Ganges to bathe before dawn, Kabir lay full length upon the steps of the *ghat*. The master, treading unexpectedly upon the body of the boy, exclaimed in his astonishment, 'Ram, Ram, the *mantra* of his sect. On the strength of this, Kabir claimed to have been accepted as the guru's disciple. Both Brahmins and Muhammadans were annoyed by this overstepping of the bounds of creed and at once took Ramananda to task. The latter denied that he had accepted a Muhammadan disciple, but when Kabir was brought before him and related what had taken place at the bathing ghat Ramananda unhesitatingly embraced him saying 'Beyond all questioning you became my disciple. Thenceforward he was recognized as the leading spirit among Ramananda's followers. But he did not, on this account, give up the ordinary occupations of life. He returned to the weaver's house and set to work on the loom.

His whole life seems to have been one of

natural, wholesome activity. One of his sayings was, 'He is the real Sadhu . . . who teaches you to be still in the midst of all your activities' There was nothing strained or eccentric about his life. According to some legends he was no ascetic, but married and had a family. He apparently lived a life perfectly normal to all outward seeming, but filled with a deeper, more poignant joy than is the privilege of the worldling, because it had its roots in an experience deeper than all other emotions of the human spirit. At one time he sings

Why put on the robe of the monk and live a life
aloof from the world in lonely pride?

Behold! my heart dances in the delight of a hundred
arts

And the Creator is well pleased

At another time he expresses his ecstatic joy
in the simple things of life in these words

O Sadhu! the simple union is the best

Since the day when I met with my Lord, there has
been no end to the sport of our love

I shut not my eyes, I close not my ears I do not
mortify my body,

I see with eyes open and smile, and behold His
beauty everywhere

I utter His name, and whatever I see, it reminds me
of Him whatever I do it becomes His worship

All accounts agree in attributing to Kabir a long life. Shortly before his death he determined to leave Benares for Maghar, about six marches distant. As it was popularly believed that all who died at Maghar must return to

earth in the form of asses, his disciples cried out against this wish of their master, but found it impossible to change it. Shortly after reaching that city he died, and so great by this time was the regard of both Muhammadans and Hindus, for one whom through life they had baited as a heretic, that there was a dispute between them for his body.

To this day he is remembered as one of those reformers who, from time to time, has arisen in India to overthrow the mighty barriers which divide one part of God's family from another.

VI CHAITANYA

THE scene is the night of a lunar eclipse in a village of Bengal. The people of the village are chanting the name, 'Harī! Harī!' In one of the homes in the village lies a new born baby boy. No boy ever had so many names to choose from. His father and mother called him Bishwambhar. He was also called by his parents Nimai (meaning short lived), because they had lost their first eight children—all of them daughters—in infancy. By giving the tenth child a disparaging name they thought his life might be saved. On account of his marvellous beauty, however, he went more often by the name Gauranga (fair complexioned), and yet it is not by any of these names that we know him, but by the name he chose for himself when grown to manhood—Chaitanya. It is one of the best known and best loved names in Bengal to day. Millions of men and women, high and low, rich and poor, sound the praises and tell the story of Chaitanya, the boy who lived and played and studied in a Bengali village more than four hundred years ago.

Many accounts of his early years have come down to us and the character of the boy that shines through them all is that of one gifted with a personality of unusual charm. He was full of

Chaitanya married very early. When he was about twenty he made a tour of eastern Bengal, where he astonished all his hearers by his learning, and drew many valuable presents as tributes to his knowledge. Young, rich, brilliant, famous, he seemed to have the world at his feet.

But all this was cast aside, when he met on one of his pilgrimages Ishwar Puri, a Vaishnava monk. This monk's guru had first introduced the new cult of Vishnu-worship and *bhakti* (or loving devotion) among the monks of Bengal. The monk himself, his heart full of inexpressible joy and love, was to Chaitanya a revelation. The result of this meeting was to take forever from Chaitanya his pride in learning and to make of him a humble *bhakta*. The special object of his love was Krishna, and he seems to have given up every other interest and occupation in order to worship and meditate on his beloved. He gathered around himself the devout and enthusiastic in his town, and with them often danced and sang and discoursed on the sweetness and beauty of Krishna. He would spend whole nights in such discourse, forgetting time and all other concerns in his absorption in Krishna, and making those around him as forgetful as himself. Frequently he forgot for a day, or several days, to eat. With most of us the desires of the body and mind must first be satisfied; but with Chaitanya it was always the hunger of his spirit that must be fed. He was like the artist who, drunk with beauty, is nevertheless filled with an insatiable longing for

beauty. He experienced such ecstasy at times or fell into such swoons, as to make men say he was mad. The children in the street would throw dust at him, and clap their hands, saying 'Lo! there goes the ascetic, mad after God!'

The cold formalists of his town looked with disgust on Chaitanya's sudden change, and treated him with bitter hatred. The flaming torch was in their midst and they would have preferred an icicle. Chaitanya was able to do very little to overcome their opposition, and finally decided to become a *sannyasi* as he felt he could in that way best appeal to them. So at the age of twenty four he bound himself to a life of asceticism, and began the preaching which was to bring to so many thousands a new revelation of God.

He went first to Puri a city of the temple Jagannath in Orissa. On entering the temple he was so overcome with emotion that he could not see the image through his blinding tears. He said again and again, 'I have beheld him, —yea the Lord of the Universe is before me.' He embraced all whom he met, and pointed upwards, but in his deep joy he could find no words. Here he remained a year, not attracting much notice at first. But before long a famous *Adi* scholar of Orissa meeting him, tried to convert him from his faith. For many days Chaitanya listened to him in humility and silence. Then he took up his opponent's doctrines and overthrew them one by one. His arguments are said to have so convinced the scholar that he became an

enthusiastic convert to Vaishnavism. But it is possible that Chaitanya's humility and kindness were more powerful weapons than his eloquence or learning.



He then started on a five-year pilgrimage to the holy cities of India, going first to the south. He preached the new religion wherever he went.

and people listened to him with unbounded delight. 'All who came to see forgot their homes and stayed to join in the dance of Sree Krishna Gopal, men and women, old and young, all were swept away by the tide of spiritual love.' It is said that at one place he embraced a leper, and the man was in consequence healed of his leprosy. At Travancore he met the Maharaja, who shed tears in deep spiritual joy, and Chaitanya embraced him, saying, 'He who sheds tears at the name of God is dearer to me than life itself.' Robbers and women of evil life to whom he spoke abandoned their wickedness and turned to lives of holiness. At one place, where a Brahmin lad had become a convert to his views, the boy's father came out to beat Chaitanya for having turned the head of his only son. Chaitanya said, 'Here am I, completely in your hands. Beat me as much as you will, but sing the praises of the Lord, that is the price you will have to pay for beating me my friend.' It is not surprising that the father also became a convert.

Chaitanya opened the door of *bhakti* to all men, irrespective of caste. To his two great friends and followers, Nityananda and Advaitacharya, he said, 'Teach the lessons of faith in Krishna to all men down to the Chandals.' It is a thousand pities that after his death this door, which he had so generously opened to the lowest castes, should have been shut in their faces.

Having gone through South India he turned his steps towards Brindaban and the Jumna in the north, the scenes of Krishna's life. The

hardships of the long journey were unnoticed by him. It was to him a continuous experience of ecstasy and devotion. He embraced even trees and animals in his fervour. He and his companions continually chanted, 'Hari! Hari!' or sang songs in praise of their beloved Krishna. At Brindaban his visit was one long rapture. He bathed in the sacred pools, worshipped at the hills and shrines, and continuously sang, danced and prayed.

He then returned to Puri, where he spent the remaining eighteen years of his life in company with his disciples and friends. He must have been one of the most lovable men that ever lived. His beauty, his charm, his sympathy, the brilliance of his mind, the unworldliness of his aims, made a very rare combination. Thousands worshipped him as a god. He never claimed such worship, and often rebuked it. But one of his biographers has truly said that he was one of the few God-intoxicated men this world has ever known.

VII. TULSI DAS

WE are told that this boy was born under an unlucky conjunction of the stars—unlucky not to himself but to his parents, for it portended their death. They seemed to think they could escape this fate by abandoning their child. In consequence, the baby was adopted and brought up by a Brahmin named Narhari Das. Perhaps his parents in 'abandoning' him took care that he fell into good hands or kept a careful eye on him afterwards, for the boy knew quite definitely their names and caste. He himself was at first named Rambola, but afterwards chose the name by which he is known to-day—Tulsi Das.

Born nearly 300 years ago in a village of North India (there is much uncertainty about his birthplace), he lived a healthy, happy life. From his adopted father, who was also his guru, he early learned the story of Rama. It must have been a wonderful privilege to waken the tender mind of this unusual boy. And the guru must have been one of those rare teachers, gifted with the power of inspiring hero-worship in their pupils. As he read and explained the wonderful old classics of India to the little lad, did he dream that his listener would one day write a work as great as any of them?

If the boy, as he grew older thought the same

'long, long thoughts of childhood' that have come to boys and girls in every age, he must sometimes have puzzled over the problem of the purpose of his life. Surely God had some special plan for him, some particular bit of work for him to do, which would go undone if he did not in time discover that purpose. Not for many years did he learn the answer to his question. But all these years were spent in daily practice and self-discipline in the things he found he could do best, so that when the time came he was ready.

He became—though this he could not know—one of the world's great writers. But he did not become so all of a sudden. We sometimes stand before a picture or statue which so completely satisfies us that we think only, What sureness and strength what grace and delicacy of touch are there! We forget that behind all that perfection of line and form lie years of discipline and effort, defeats and, perhaps, tears, but always courageous striving. Tulsī Dās, we know, had the mysterious gift of genius. No one has ever been able to explain what genius is, but we think of it as that supernatural quality which stamps the work of the fortunate few.

Genius alone, however, would never have made him the writer he became. He studied, like other boys of his age, in the schools of Soron. What sort of teaching he received there we do not know. In every age and country there are teachers so filled with the love of truth, and so

enthusiastic in imparting it, that they hand on the torch of learning from one generation to the next. His guru may have been such a master-teacher, and it is possible that he sat at the feet of another such in the schools.

But his chief training must have been that which he gave himself. Throughout his life he had two great loves—one of the mind and one of the soul. All the power of his mind went out to great literature. He had a delicate ear and a sense of music which revelled in poetic forms. He had also the imagination of the poet, which saw into the heart of life. His other passion was for God. It may have been only a fitful one in his early years, but it finally overpowered every other desire.

The turning point of his life came a few years after his marriage. Such an experience comes to different persons in different ways. Sometimes it comes through a great loss, a great friendship, the memory of one we have loved and lost, the message of a book or of a preacher. With Tulsi Das it was a chance remark from his wife. He loved her with an intense devotion, and could not bear to be separated from her. One day, shortly after the birth of their little son, he came home to find that she had gone to her father's house. Unable to bear the loneliness of his home, he hastened after her, although it involved crossing a swollen river in the dark. His wife half playfully rebuked him, saying, 'If only you had as great a devotion to Rama, the earth would become gold.' The words pierced

his heart Suddenly he had a vision of the blessedness of a life wholly given up to God The next morning at daybreak he left home for Benares, where he became a devotee of Rama

For a number of years he wandered about as an ascetic from place to place Many legends are told of the miracles he performed. During these years he was being further fitted, all unconsciously, for the work that lay before him He was meeting people of all classes and conditions, sharing their food as he journeyed with them, praying with them, begging with them, learning their habits, their thoughts, hearing their stories and immersing himself in the life of his time With the unceasing habit of artists, he was constantly translating all his experiences into words and phrases of beauty

This period of his life, too, was the beginning of friendships with some of the famous men of his time Among those he counted his friends were Todar Mal (Akbar's Minister), Maharaj Mar Singh and his brother, Jagat Singh of Ambur. A man once asked him why such great people came now to see one who had before been so obscure and unsought Tulsi replied 'Once did I beg and could not get even a cracked cowrie in alms Who wanted me then for any need? But Rama, the cherisher of the poor, made me of great price I used to beg from door to door for alms, now kings are at my feet Saith Tulsi, *Then* it was without Rama *now* Rama is my helper'

At last, in his forty third year, he found the

work that he was intended to do. He was to write the story of Rama in epic form. This was



the story which he tells us he learned from his guru in his early years, the story in Valmiki's

great poem, the *Ramayana*, which he read and re-read in his later years. But the story as he gave it to India had an appeal and message that were new.

Tulsi Das, as he began his work, was perhaps unconscious of any special influence resting on him. He did not know that he was doing a great work. He felt that he was an ordinary man doing an ordinary work, but work that satisfied his mind and heart completely and intensely.

He called his book the *Ram-charit-manas*, 'The Lake of the Deeds of Rama,' but it is called by everybody to-day by the shorter and more popular name of the *Ramayana* of Tulsi Das. There are many differences between this book and the *Ramayana* of Valmiki. The episodes are not given in the same order in the two poems. In some cases entirely different episodes are introduced, or those that are compressed in one are expanded in the other. In Valmiki's poem Rama is depicted as hero, while in Tulsi Das's he appears as an incarnation of the Supreme, who for men's sake came down from heaven to live among men and teach them the way to God. The characters in Tulsi Das's book, too, have a reality and freshness of their own. Even in the translation we are made aware of the royal graciousness of Rama and the dear and womanly charm of Sita.

But greater than all these differences is the fact that, while Valmiki's poem was written in the Sanskrit, Tulsi Das's was in Hindi, the

vernacular of the people. He knew he would meet with critics, especially among the Sanskrit pundits, who would resent his bringing religion to the uneducated multitude. But nothing would deter him from his purpose. He had characteristic answers for those who tried to convince him that to write in Sanskrit was a work of greater merit. To one he said, 'If thou find a jewelled vessel full of poison and an earthen cup full of ambrosia, which wilt thou refuse and which wilt thou accept?' To another he replied, 'Whether it be in the vulgar tongue or whether it be in Sanskrit, all that is necessary is true love for the Lord. When a rough, woollen blanket is wanted to protect one in a storm, who takes out a silken vest?'

Tulsi Das has his reward. True there are those to this day who prefer Valmiki to him, but Tulsi Das speaks so directly to the heart of these for whom he wrote that his words are dearly prized and honoured by them. A hundred million people living in North India to-day know and love this book, which is read evening by evening beside the fires in every village.

It was a gift to the common people, but wrought with such self-sacrificing patience and love of perfection that it is acclaimed by critics as 'undoubtedly a great poem worthy to rank amongst the great classical masterpieces of the world's literature. The *Ramayana* of Tulsi Das will always hold its place as the work of a great literary genius.'

But it is more than that. Its spiritualizing in

fluence upon the thought and life of the people in North India during the past three hundred years has been so profound that Tulsī Das has come to be recognized as one of the religious geniuses of India.

Tulsī Das's phrase, in one of his answers to his critics, 'All that is necessary is true love for the Lord,' is perhaps the key to his greatness. A man can write a book no greater than himself, and the *Ramayana* is the measure of his personality. What makes one book succeed and another fail? What makes one take its place among the books that the world does not willingly let die, and another forgotten in a few years? We cannot tell. Perhaps one thing that characterizes a work that is to last through time is the unselfishness of the motive behind it. Tulsī Das wrote not for money or fame not even for the approval of his fellows. He knew only that a great light had fallen upon his heart and life, and he longed to bring that light to others. All his yearnings and aspirations all the love of his heart for God which is summed up in the word *bhakti*, poured itself into this great poem and awakened a responsive echo in the hearts of his readers. During the remaining years of his life (he lived to be ninety one) he wrote several other books all of them on the subject of his hero, Rāma. But his chief title to remembrance rests in one golden book the work he had been sent into the world to do.

VIII AKBAR

THIS is the story of a boy who had the magic touch upon life. Not that he fully succeeded in all that he undertook but that everything he did grew greater from his touch. The boy was Akbar.

Few have had as romantic and thrilling a boyhood as his. He was born nearly four hundred years ago in the Sind desert when his father was fleeing from his throne. He was taken prisoner by his uncle when a baby less than a year old, twice returned to his father and twice more captured by his uncle before he was nine. He was brought up in the midst of fighting and danger so serious that at one time his uncle actually threatened to expose him before his father's army on the city wall where the fire was hottest. So he had plenty of opportunity to develop the strength and courage which later so distinguished him. Throughout his life he was capable of enduring great fatigue. Once he rode from Agra to Ajmer (two hundred and forty miles) in a day and a night. As a man he was an enthusiastic polo player and in hunting was known to cut down a royal tigress with a single stroke when she crossed his path. His preparation had been gained in hunting, riding and the other sports of young warriors in the hill forts of

Kabul. It was a hard, rough childhood, in spite of romantic adventures, yet he kept throughout a certain grace and poetry and a sense of honour



rare in that age. Such was the boyhood of Akbar.

His real adventures began when he was thirteen. Shortly before, his father, Humayun, had regained the throne of Delhi, but held it only a

to his taste. He much preferred the work of organizing the government, for which he had so remarkable a genius. But he saw that all through the ages disunion had been India's fatal weakness. Not only for four hundred years before his time had Muhammadan conquerors robbed and terrified the people, but even now the petty kings were constantly warring on each other and keeping the land in a state of utter misery. There would be no chance for peace and settled government until they had all been brought under one head. He did not wage a single war for mere glory of conquest. But with his mind fixed on the goal of a peaceful, united India, he steadily carried on one campaign after another, until his kingdom stretched from the mountains of Kabul and Kandahar to the frontiers of Burma.

During these twenty years his wars carried him to every part of the country, and gave him a chance to study the condition of the people. He felt sure that the system of governing India by force was wrong. He saw that, if his government was to endure, it must be based on mutual trust and respect. His heart went out most of all to the Rajputs, the proud, brave people whose spirit was so like his own. Could not their friendship be won? To attain this he felt that no sacrifice of his personal feelings and beliefs was too great to make.

On this score he received no encouragement from the men of his court, whose one idea was persecution of the Hindus and all other unbelievers. But in spite of their opposition, he married

the daughter of the Rajah of Jaipur. Then he remitted the two taxes that bore most heavily on Hindu pride and pockets, the pilgrim tax and the *jizya*, or poll tax. The Rajputs were not slow to respond to his spirit of generosity and trust, and in their turn sacrificed some of their old beliefs in order to bring peace and prosperity to their country, with honour instead of contempt and oppression for themselves.

But Akbar realised that the real hindrance to India's unity was a religious one, and although his effort to overcome this ended in failure, it was a splendid failure. He had been born a Muhammadan, but he could not bring himself to believe that Muhammadanism must therefore be true for all mankind. His contact with Hinduism through his Rajput wife made him respect that religion, and his friendship with Portuguese missionaries, whom he summoned from Goa to Delhi, made him look favourably upon Christianity. A poem written by his friend Abul Fazl, which we cannot help feeling was the expression of Akbar's own mind represents a worshipper going from temple to mosque and from mosque to church, and everywhere finding behind the form and the creed God Himself, who recognises in each place His true worshipper. It is not surprising that one with such broad sympathies should have tried to found a universal religion by selecting the best from all faiths. Such a man made religion, however, could not satisfy the human heart. It had no vital force and lasted no longer than Akbar's own life. But his was a

noble dream of bringing into one family all of God's children, a dream which again and again has haunted the sons of India.

He has often been spoken of as a dreamer whose dreams failed to come true. But this was because they were too great for his age, and are still too great, perhaps, for ours. He was like 'the sailor' who 'never reaches the north star. Yet, without a north star, he could never come to port.'

Few men called out such trust and confidence as Akbar did, few had such loyal friends, few knew both how to work and play with such eager intensity. Above all, he had the wonderful gift of imagination, which caused him to come with fresh interest to every subject, and to cast a glamour over the most humdrum occupations. He always did the ordinary thing in an extraordinary way. He put a spiritual, flame-like quality into the dull routine of life. And so, long after the buildings which bring him to mind have crumbled to dust, his vivid, adventurous spirit will be remembered and loved in India.

market, still alive,' bore their baby some distance along the route by which the caravan was to travel, and left her by the roadside

It turned out exactly as they had planned. The merchant, attracted by the extraordinary beauty of the child, gave orders that she should be taken up at once, and then, learning her story, handed the baby over to be cared for by her own mother for wages. Afterwards, finding the father to be a man of unusual ability, he took him into his employ, and later introduced him to the Emperor, Akbar. Thus the baby was brought to Agra the scene of her greatest triumphs in the years to come.

The gaiety, the charm, the beauty and the imperiousness of one who was born to rule showed themselves even in the childhood of Mihr un Nisa (queen of women), as she was called, or Nur Jahan (light of the world), as she is known to us to day. When she and her companions played at grown up games we are sure that she was always the one chosen to be the queen, and we can almost see the adorable air of childish haughtiness with which she received the homage of her little subjects. When she grew up no princess in the court was as exquisite and beautiful as she. And her mind keen, brilliant, passionate in its hunger for beauty, was fed with all the rich life of the court of Akbar.

It was a magnificent age in which she lived, such a golden age as the Renaissance in Italy or the Elizabethan age in England. The longing for fuller expression for colour, song, music, splendour, was gratified in those times by the poets and

singers, the painters and architects, who flocked to the court in such numbers

The wonderful fort at Agra and the town of Fatehpur-Sikri contained lofty buildings of cut stone, and palaces and mosques of marble, wrought with a beauty of craftsmanship that is lost to us to day. The festivals, especially those of the spring equinox and the king's birthday, when the scene was made brilliant with gay carpets and hangings richly embroidered with gold, pearl and precious stones, when processions of hundreds of richly-adorned elephants and horses passed through the streets, followed by rhinoceroses, lions, tigers, panthers, hunting leopards, hounds and hawks, when the king was weighed in golden scales against silver, gold, perfumery and other substances, which were distributed among the spectators—all this represented an age of brilliance which has long since passed away

Even though Nur Jahan was shut into the zenana while still almost a child, the songs and poetry, and even some of the religious and philosophical discussions of the court, found echoes in the women's apartments while from balconies protected by carved screens the court ladies looked down on most of the great functions. Almost unconsciously the girl absorbed the atmosphere of luxury, of worldly wisdom and statecraft

Yet with all the refinement and culture in the court, there was the seed of the fatal softness and enervation produced by luxury. This showed itself particularly in Prince Selim or Jahangir as he is known to history, who had all of his father's

artistic taste, but little of his self control. Such unusual beauty as Nur Jahan's, if it had been united with high birth, would have pointed unmistakably to a royal marriage. But she had missed this gift from the fairies who attended her birth. Her father, though the emperor's valued and trusted official, for he had risen to be the Lord High Treasurer, was of humble extraction. So Akbar turned a deaf ear to all hints that this magnificent young girl would be a suitable match for his son.

Then fate, who loves to mock at men's plans, took a hand at the shuttle of Nur Jahan's web of life. One day, as she sat idly by a fountain in the royal gardens, the prince wandered through with two fluttering doves on his wrist. Seeing something that he wanted, he hastily thrust the birds into the girl's hands saying, 'Hold these for me. When he returned a little later, he found to his annoyance that but one dove was in her hand.

'How did you lose my bird?' he angrily demanded.

Nettled by his tone, she answered 'So my lord and with a sudden gesture let the second go free.

When the prince, who, up to this moment had thought more of his birds than of the girl, turned in indignation to face her, his anger slowly melted in wonder at sight of the loveliness of her face, heightened now to vividness by her defiance. From that moment he was her slave a fact of which Nur Jahan was well aware.

When Akbar learned of his son's determination

to marry the beggar maid, as she seemed to him, he peremptorily forbade it, and at the same time recommended that she should be married and removed from the prince's sight. Accordingly she was soon after married to a young Persian named Sher Afghan Khan, who took her with him to Burdwan in Bengal, over which Akbar had made him Viceroy.

Although it is likely that Nur Jahan was not consulted about this marriage, it proved one of great happiness. If she had dreamed for a moment of a more brilliant career, that had resolutely been set aside. She and her husband had the capacity and the desire for work, for love and for life. The new life, which was one of comparative hardship after the luxury of the court, called forth all their enthusiasm.

Then, fourteen years later came one day the news of Akbar's death. And now Prince Selim, who ascended the throne under the name of Jahangir, took a turn at the shuttle. About a year after his accession he sent a messenger to Sher Afghan Khan to bid him give up Nur Jahan. This was indignantly refused but the messenger succeeded in drawing Sher Afghan into a quarrel, in the course of which he murdered him. Then seizing Nur Jahan he carried her as a prisoner to Delhi.

Jahangir lost no time in begging her to marry him, but Nur Jahan disillusioned by her terrible experience, would have nothing to do with him. And Jahangir, who though he could be brutal in his selfishness yet would not force her love,

placed her among his mother's attendants in the zenana, and apparently forgot all about her.

The next few years were strangely dreary to Nur Jahan in her widowhood. With only her daughter as companion, proudly refusing any help from the Emperor, she supported herself entirely by her skill in embroidery and painting. At first her spirit and brain lay numb and deadened by what she had experienced. She was incapable of feeling and caring for any one, and it was only gradually that emotion and life crept back to her. In the end, even joy must have come back, that sensitive joy which is made poignant by pain. Her highly-bred courage triumphed over the sense of waste and defeat, and gave her once more a thirst for life.

In modern times she would have found dozens of outlets for her energies and powers. For her in the seventeenth century there was but one way of escape from the limited life of the zenana—the way of marriage. After four years of virtual imprisonment, she took the way out and married Jahangir. The Emperor had entered one day the room where Nur Jahan, dressed in a plain white robe, sat at work among her slaves. As she rose and saluted him, he looked from her to the richly dressed slave girls, and asked in astonishment, 'Why this difference between the sun of womankind and her slaves?'

'Those born to servitude must dress as it shall please those whom they serve,' she answered. 'These are my servants, and I lighten the burden of bondage by every indulgence in my power;

but I who am your slave O Emperor of the world must dress according to your pleasure and not my own

This meeting with Nur Jahan was sufficient to revive the Emperor's love for her and shortly after they were married. What motives influenced her besides her desire for escape we can only guess. She could have had no illusions about Jahangir. Although not more than forty he was old in dissipation and cruelty. She must have realized that marriage could not have for them its real meaning of helping each to discover and bring out the best in the other. Some have thought that the Emperor's constancy made its appeal others that her consciousness of her power over him made her long to use it for his good and the good of the kingdom.

There was much to commend in the first results of Nur Jahan's use of her power. The age was soft cynical and luxurious. The arts especially painting were at their height under Jahangir but with cultivated minds went degenerate lives in those days. Jahangir himself was one who with an unlimited habit of luxury but without a saving sense of responsibility had no more control over his subjects than over himself. Against such a court and such a husband Nur Jahan pitted her strength. Jahangir indeed submitted willingly enough fully content to place in her capable hands the management of everything and everybody including himself. And Nur Jahan brought to her task the gift of an immensely forceful personality. She was no longer the girl of the

lovely and appealing charm whom Jahangir had seen and loved in the royal gardens twenty years before. She was the finished product of a subtle and worldly civilization. The polish of her mind and the perfect grace of her manners gave her an attractiveness that was far beyond any merely physical beauty. All her culture and her mastery in an age that was corrupt, were used on behalf of decency and good government. Jahangir reduced his daily allowance of liquor, and abstained from the barbarous cruelties he had practised, irresponsible and dishonest officials were replaced by those who had proved trustworthy, and the expenses of the court were cut down while its magnificence was increased.

She gave herself with the zest of an ardent lover of life to the sports and pastimes of the age. She seems to have been one of those fortunate persons who did everything a little better than anyone else. Jahangir tells us, in his *Memoirs*, of her skill in hunting.

On the 7th as the huntsmen had marked down four tigers, when two watches and three *gharis* had passed I went out to hunt them with my ladies. When the tigers came in sight Nur Jahan Begam submitted that if I would order her, she herself would kill the tigers with her gun. I said 'Let it be so.' She shot two tigers with one shot each and knocked over the two others with four shots. In the twinkling of an eye she deprived of life the bodies of the four tigers. Until now such shooting was never seen, that from the top of an elephant and inside of a howdah six shots should be made and not one miss, so that the four beasts found no opportunity to spring or move. As a reward for this good shooting I gave her a pair of brace

lets of diamond worth 100,000 rupees and scattered 1,000 *ashrafs* over her

On Saturday, the 10th, the huntsmen represented that there was in the neighbourhood a tiger that greatly troubled and injured the ryots and wayfarers. I immediately ordered them to bring together a number of elephants and surround the forest and at the end of the day myself rode out with my ladies. As I had vowed that I would not injure any living thing with my own hand,¹ I told Nur Jahan to shoot at him. An elephant is not at ease when it smells a tiger, and is constantly in movement, and to hit with a gun from a litter (howdah) is a very difficult matter, insomuch that Mirza Rustam, who, after me, is unequalled in shooting, has several times missed three or four shots from an elephant. Yet Nur Jahan Begam so hit the tiger with one shot that it was immediately killed.

The imposing of her will on others, under taken at first for their reformation, produced in Nur Jahan a restless fever for power. Not only was her father made Prime Minister and her brother raised to a high position, but she herself enjoyed such honours as had never been awarded to the wife of an emperor in India. She gave commands to the officers of the realm from her seat aloft on the royal balcony, and her name, along with that of the Emperor, was placed on the imperial seals and on the coinage. All this was slowly preparing the way for her downfall. It was not freedom and fullness of life that she sought for her people, but control and repression of life. And the chains which she fastened upon others fastened themselves upon her.

¹ He had taken this vow during a serious illness

Soon she began the intrigues which so marred her last years. Nur Jahan had by this time in her passion for power unconsciously lost all sense of right and wrong. The only standard she recognized was her own desire and will. Anyone who would not bend to her despotic personality must be broken or removed from her path. Jahangir and all but one or two of the officials of the empire had from the first been as clay in her hands. She now wished to obtain as complete power over her stepsons the princes. Shah Jahan, Jahangir's second son who seemed marked to be successor to the throne had married her niece the beautiful and gentle Mumtaz Mahal. She hoped to win him to her side by openly favouring his claims. But finding it impossible to break through his cold reserve she began hating him as cordially as she had at first supported him. She now turned her attention to Shahriyar the Emperor's youngest son and finding that she could manage him perfectly married her daughter to him and began an elaborate series of intrigues for securing his succession.

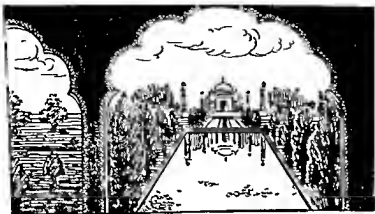
Next to Shah Jahan the one who most resisted her influence was Mohabat Khan the Emperor's general. She tried in various ways to humiliate and to trap him. But finally Mohabat had his revenge. While Jahangir was on his way to quell an insurrection in Kabul Mohabat took him prisoner. Nur Jahan made several attempts to rescue him by force. When at last failing in these measures she went to Mohabat's camp and

begged him to allow her to share her husband's captivity, she was told that Jahangir, weary of her intrigues, had signed an order for her execution. She must have felt all the contempt for her cowardly husband that we feel at this announcement. But she had long been accustomed to conceal her feelings, and replying that she was ready to die if it was her lord's pleasure, she begged to be allowed to kiss his hand for the last time. Once in his presence, she was able to exercise her old power over him and nothing more was heard about the death warrant. Not long after she contrived their escape.

The sixteen years of their married life had very nearly run their course. Soon after the episode of the imprisonment, they went to Kashmir, their usual summer resort. There Jahangir was seized with a violent attack of asthma. Although he was hurried down to the plains, his constitution, enfeebled by years of drink and opium, was unable to rally, and he died near Lahore where he was buried.

And now the last one to weave a bit of the pattern in Nur Jahan's life was Shah Jahan the new Emperor. One of his first acts was to put to death her son-in-law, Shahriyar, her candidate for the throne. In a moment all the work of her years of intrigue was undone. It was no weakling like Jahanogir who was now Emperor, and Nur Jahan saw that her only safety lay in going back to the zenana. She put on the white robe of widowhood, and during the remaining nineteen years of her life never again appeared in public.

Shah Jahan treated her generously, allowing her a pension of £250,000 a year until her death. She gave herself up to prayer and good works, and appeared to devote herself to the memory of her husband. She lies buried in the tomb that she herself erected, close to that of Jahangir, at Lahore.



X. MUMTAZ MAHAL

HAVE you ever on a day of hot sunshine come upon a shaded pool in which white water lilies lay upon the cool green of broad leaves? Something of their mystic, haunting beauty is felt in the sight of the building which enshrines the body of Arjumand Banu, wife of Shah Jahan. Something of their grace and purity we associate with the girl who grew up, three hundred years ago, in the palaces and gardens of the Mughals.

Her life was more hidden and obscure than that of her aunt, the brilliant Nur Jahan, Jahan-gir's wife. We have no record of it until her marriage, at the age of nineteen, to Shah Jahan (then Prince Khurram). But the innocent beauty, the tender gaiety, the compassionate pity which she showed as a woman were the characteristics of the girl who grew up unspoiled among the vanities of court life.

We picture her, a merry little maid, playing among the roses and cypresses which grew in the palace gardens, the roses to symbolize life, and the cypresses to remind one of death. We feel that she must have loved the simple things of life—the rare books which she heard read (for she could not read them as her learned daughter Jehanara did), the glitter of stars in the sky and of fire-flies in the dusk of the garden, the cooing of grey pigeons and the lilting song of the dhayal, the deep rose of lotus blossoms and the starry white jasmine, the rush of the monsoon rains across the dry parched plains. She seemed never ambitious, never envious, and never exciting the envy of others. For she had the friendliness of a bird.

It is small wonder that Shah Jahan loved her devotedly. The author of the *Padishahnamah*, our chief authority for her life, tells us that although he had two other wives, those were only political alliances, not love matches. Mumtaz Mahal ('The Crown of the Palace,' as he called her) so fully occupied his heart that there was no room for any other love. Until the day of her death, which occurred a little more than a year after Shah Jahan became Emperor, she accompanied him on all his journeys and military expeditions.

Her gentleness and pity were known to all, and her sympathy with every case of need endeared her to her people. Sati-un-nissa, her chief servant, who loved her with a rare devotion, was her principal help in bringing to her notice the

poor women in distress. If it was a girl with no dowry, a widow who had been left penniless or a wife whose husband could not afford to educate their children, she knew that she had only to lay the matter before the Empress. Within twenty four hours a generous gift would be secured from the Emperor to meet the needs of each.

When Mumtaz Mahal died, nineteen years after her marriage, Shah Jahan was overwhelmed with grief. He thought for a time of resigning his throne and becoming a *fakir* for the rest of his life. But he soon realized the selfishness of the wish. Kingship he felt was a sacred charge which no one could lay aside at his pleasure. Yet the incentive to living was gone. 'Empire has no sweetness, life itself has no relish for me now,' he lamented in sorrowful accents. No one ever filled the place in his heart left vacant by Mumtaz Mahal. He did not marry again though he lived thirty five years longer.

A legend relates that Mumtaz Mahal, when she was dying laid upon her husband two commands: that he should not marry again lest her children and the children of the later wife should quarrel for the throne; and that he should build over her 'such a mausoleum that the like of it may not be seen anywhere else in the world.' But the historian of the *Padishahnamah* is silent about this and it seems out of character with the Empress's sweet humility and self forgetfulness. It is more reasonable to think that the desire to build the most beautiful tomb the world had

ever seen originated in the mind of Shah Jahan, and that he occupied himself with this work as a means of soothing the grief of his heart

According to the old Tartar custom, a garden was chosen as a site for the tomb, a garden planted with roses and solemn cypresses, which had formerly served as a pleasure ground. Plans for the tomb were submitted by all the master architects of the land. Twenty thousand men were employed in the construction, which took eleven years and cost fifty lakhs of rupees. Every part of India and Central Asia contributed materials—marble, red sandstone, jasper, jade, crystal, turquoise, lapis lazuli, sapphire, coral, cornelian, diamonds, onyx and amethyst.

We hardly know which to wonder at more, the fur loveliness of the woman's soul that inspired the dream of the Taj Mahal, or the artists who caught its spirit of immortal beauty and turned it into marble. As we stand under the great arch that opens on the garden, we see at the end of a long terrace a dome of gleaming white, which mirrors itself in the great canal lying between two rows of cypress trees. Or, if we cross the river to the fort and ascend the lovely Jasmine Tower, we see the sight which Shah Jahan saw daily during the last seven years of his life as a prisoner, the silver white dome, 'floating like a mirage of some wondrous fairy palace above the waters of the blue Jumna. From all corners of the world come pilgrims yearly to visit the resting place of sweet Mumtaz Mahal.

XI AURANGZIB

DID you ever hear of a fifteen year old boy, who during an elephant fight when his horse was struck down by an elephant leaped to the ground and prepared to attack the huge beast with his sword? Did you ever hear that this boy when grown to young manhood once found his soldiers fleeing in battle and immediately ordered his elephant's legs to be chained to the ground, thus turning back the tide of defeat? And still again of how in another fight when the hour of evening prayer arrived he dismounted unarmed from his horse in the thick of the battle to kneel down and repeat his prayers—an act which so awed the opposing general that he called off his troops saying that to fight with such a man was to destroy one's self?

If you have read Indian history you know this boy. He was Aurangzib son of Shah Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal born in a little village near Ujjain in Malwa almost exactly three hundred years ago. We should hardly have expected the son of his parents to show such rock like qualities of toughness obstinacy and indomitableness. Perhaps some strain from his old Tartar forbears reappeared in him and made him scorn the soft luxurious life of the Delhi and Agra of his day. Whatever the cause we find along with the

strength of his character a certain hardness and a mental blindness, which made him, in spite of



his wonderful gifts a stupendous failure. For all his life he was subject to the fatal malady of Imperviousness to New Ideas.

At the age of ten he was put under the care of a tutor. He had a very keen mind, and quickly mastered what he read. He began the work of committing the Koran to memory, and found his chief delight in theological works by Muhammadan authors. He never cared for painting or music, and of poems he liked only those 'containing good counsels.'

Years after, he protested against the uselessness of this kind of education for a prince. For when, shortly after he became Emperor, his old tutor appeared, expecting to receive a good appointment at Court, Aurangzib rated him roundly for teaching him so much that was worthless, and withholding from him all that it was necessary for him to know, saying that it was from others that he had had to obtain most of his knowledge.

He grew up in the midst of brothers and sisters very different from himself. Where they were high spirited and pleasure loving, he was stern and sombre, giving so much time to prayer and meditation that his eldest brother scornfully nicknamed him 'the Saint.' Like too many so-called good people of to-day, with sour dispositions, his suspicious and critical presence cast a gloom over every company. One wonders what his long hours of prayer meant to him. We usually think of such times as quiet, restful spaces in one's life, when the fret of weariness melts away, and the spirit through fresh and living contact with the spirit of God becomes humbler, softer, purer, so that a new sweetness and tenderness is shed abroad in the heart. But

alas, for poor Aurangzib! That fatal malady of his made him impervious to new ideas of the soul as well as of the mind

At the early age of seventeen he was sent on an expedition to Bundela in South India, and the following year he was made viceroy of the Deccan. The imperial army under his leadership was successful. But at the end of eight years, Aurangzib, from jealousy, as is supposed, of his elder brother Dara's influence at Court, returned to Agra and resigned his position. Two years later, however, his father sent him to govern Gujarat, and then on an expedition to Balkh in Central Asia. This was followed by his governorship of Multan and Sindh, the sieges of Kandahar and his second viceroyalty of the Deccan, including the invasion of Golkonda and Bijapur.

Then came the stroke of his eldest brother, Dara, for the throne, which caused him to abandon the siege in the Deccan and hurry back to the north. For the Emperor Shah Jahan, now sixty-seven years of age, was not expected to live, and each of the four sons, with unseemly haste, tried to secure the throne for himself. Shah Jahan did not die, but a five-years war of the succession followed, from which Aurangzib emerged triumphant. His three brothers were murdered or driven into exile, his nephews poisoned, and his old father shut up in the Agra Fort (where he remained until his death, seven years later). Aurangzib carried out all this with unexampled cold bloodedness. He was forty years old when he began his reign.

His daily routine was performed methodically and unflinchingly. He allowed himself but three hours for sleep, and, except for his hours of prayer, spent his entire time in listening to cases and attending to public affairs. Nothing, not even the most serious illness (except on one occasion, when for two months his life was despaired of), was allowed to interfere with this routine in which we are told his industry and attention could not be surpassed by any clerk. But no man could work so many hours a day without finding his work a deadly bore. Instead of the fresh, eager interest and enthusiasm which Akbar brought to his work, we feel that Aurangzib, like a blinded horse going round and round in a mill, found only drudgery in doing his duty.

He set before himself three tasks: to reform the morals of the Court, to humiliate the Hindus, and to crush the two heretical kingdoms of South India—Golkonda and Bijapur.

The business of abolishing music, poetry and drunkenness from the Court was an easy matter for an absolute monarch, and the people submitted without undue fuss. There is much in the records of the time, however, to show that his strict laws on these subjects soon became a dead letter. But it was very different when it came to putting down the Hindus. It was said of the Bourbon kings in Europe that they learned nothing and they forgot nothing. Aurangzib's mind seems to have been made in the same cast-iron mould. He learned nothing from history or experience,

and forgot nothing of the old, narrow theology with which his tutor had crammed him

The entire success of the Mughal Empire, had Aurangzib but known it, rested on the spirit of friendship and conciliation adopted by his great-grandfather, Akbar, in matters political and religious. But, with unpardonable blindness and incredible sternness, he determined to reverse that policy. He revived the poll tax on Hindus which had been abolished by Akbar, and when crowds of Hindus met in the streets to petition against this, as he went out on Friday to attend the mosque, he commanded his elephants to advance, trampling the wretched people underfoot.

One of the Rajputs, the Rajah of Jodhpur, had dared to write him these brave words: 'If Your Majesty places any faith in books by distinction called divine, you will there be instructed that God is the God of all mankind, not the God of the Musalmans alone. In your temples to His name, the voice of prayer is raised, in a house of images, where a bell is shaken, He is still the object of worship.' But Aurangzib's idea-proof brain could not take in the meaning of such a declaration. His injustice to the Rajput princes caused them to revolt, and he visited them with bitter punishment, burning their homesteads, cutting down their fruit trees and defiling their temples and images. The Rajputs were forced to submit, but, as might have been expected, they became thenceforth the destroyers instead of the supporters of the Mughal Empire.

His greatest folly of all was his determination to crush the two Muhammadan kingdoms of

South India. It became with him the fixed idea of his life—an imperative religious duty. During the first twenty three years of his reign he directed the operations against Bijapur and Golkonda from Delhi. But at the age of sixty three he realized that if he was ever to conquer them he must lead his armies in person. Accordingly he set out from his capital never to return but to spend the remaining twenty six years of his life in camp. In a few years he subdued the two Muhammadan kingdoms and then set himself to crush the Hindu Marathas. The appalling cruelty with which he treated their captured leader filled the Marathas with inextinguishable hatred towards him. Aurangzib using all the force at his command could not make any impression on their troops yet he would not give up although he knew that his empire in the north was fast breaking up.

At last the time to die had come. He was now ninety years old. There was nothing but fear and loneliness at the end. A few days before he wrote to one of his sons. I came a stranger into the world and a stranger I depart. I brought nothing with me and save my human infirmities I carry nothing away. I have fears for my salvation and of what torments may await me. Although I trust in God's mercy yet terror will not quit me. But come what may I have launched my barque on the waves. Farewell farewell farewell! He was buried according to his own directions without a coffin beside the tomb of a famous saint near the deserted capital of Daulatabad.



XII SIVAJI

THREE hundred years ago, Sivaji was born into a home in which, so far as his father was concerned, he was conspicuously unwelcome. Shortly before his birth his father, Shahji Bhonsle, had betaken himself his eldest son, and another wife to Hyderabad leaving his first wife Jija Bai in charge of a Brahmin at Shivner, near Poona. Thus for some years father and son were strangers to each other. But between the mother and her boy a tie of wonderful closeness formed itself a tie all the closer for the secret pain of neglect that they shared. It was in the realm of the spirit that Jija Bai's influence on her son was most deeply felt. Her mind was stored with fairy stories ballads and tales of her country's heroes. With these she created in the little Sivaji's mind a passionate hunger for heroic achievement, a hunger which he never outgrew. We read that years later on hearing of his beloved bard who

sang the songs of his country, he risked his life by stealing right into the enemy's camp to listen to him

From a peak near the fort in Poona, in which, with his mother and guardian, he spent all but the first months of his boyhood, he could look out over the wild and beautiful scenery of the Deccan. Far below, dense masses of tropical jungle filled the valleys and plains, except where clearings had been made beside rivers for villages and farms. But the country was divided by rugged mountains, rising here and there into bare, flat topped peaks with almost inaccessible sides, which made an ideal situation for the fortresses that crowned them.

At the time of Sivaji's birth the petty Muhammadan kingdoms of the Deccan, Ahmedabad and Bijapur, were in arms against the Mughal emperor. If either side was victorious, it was generally through the help of the Hindu tribes of south western India. The Muhammadan emperor of the north, and the Muhammadan kingdoms of the south, having always to recruit their forces by soldiers brought from a distance, were gradually wearing each other down. The Hindu tribes, on the other hand, had an unlimited supply of men within the boundaries of what was known as Maharashtra, roughly corresponding to the present Bombay Presidency. These soldiers were, for part of the year, farmers at home. But after the crops had been gathered in, at a call from one of their mountain chieftains, they would mount their hardy little ponies, ride away to a fixed meeting-

place, and from there swoop down upon their foes. If successful, they would be paid with part of the plunder, and ride back again to the work of their fields. Then the forces of the Muhammadans would come against them in revenge, killing them or chasing them into the jungle, and burning their villages.

The boy Sivaji, brooding over the country which lay spread out before him, saw the devastation wrought by ceaseless petty war. The villages of his district were abandoned to wolves until the energy of his guardian, Dadaji, brought about their destruction, and the return of the villagers to their farms. He knew the people's constant dread of attack, and many a time he must have felt his heart rush out, in a surge of reckless longing and desire, to free his beloved country from the fear of invasion, and give it peace and security. From his earliest years he had made friends with the highlanders of the mountains which covered a large part of his father's estate. He went with them hunting and climbing until he knew every path and defile through the Ghats, and until he had acquired such an ascendancy over his companions that, when the time came, they flocked enthusiastically to his standard.

The situation of the country was one that demanded leadership of the highest order, but leadership for which Sivaji felt in himself the capacity. The Maratha horsemen were brave, fearless, daring, but they lacked discipline and cohesion. To unite them in an effective way, he saw that some great driving force was necessary.

And in his own soul he felt the power that would make them irresistible. His mother had called it into life years before, by her folk songs and her hero tales. From that time to this it had been there, a worry and a nuisance a whip and a scorpion, yet a longing and a glory. He went unguessed about the careless town in which he lived, dreaming of old time tales and carrying in his heart a secret image of himself as a heroic deliverer. All the patriotism all the courage, all the loyalty, which were the very essence of his religion, focussed themselves in a passionate yearning for liberty for his people. What mattered it that he was illiterate and insignificant in appearance, that his family was poor and of lowly origin that he had no resources but his hands and his brains? The sheer power of his will which set the impossible as its goal and which one day was to run like a living flame through the minds and souls of his countrymen, was fed as by a secret flow of oil from his religious life.

Difficult as it is to analyse greatness it is at least possible to recognize some of the qualities that went to the making of this boy's greatness. That which strikes us first is his physical equipment. Always slight and fragile in appearance he nevertheless developed a toughness and wiriness and a magnificent disregard of physical comfort which stood him in good stead later on. The hardness and severity, the poverty and stern necessity of his life trained him for his years of campaigning when he showed himself indifferent to cold and heat hunger and exposure. When

no more than a child he acquired that perfect horsemanship which was to give 'the mountain rat', as his enemies called him, so great an advantage

His intellectual power was that which gave fibre and strength to his personality. His enemies were to find in him one day a shrewd, long headed and, it must be admitted, a rather unscrupulous player of the game of diplomacy. He fought far more with his head than with his hands, and thus won the victory from his opponents at the cost of far less physical effort to himself. He was able to perceive the weak spot in the Mughal domination of the Deccan, and to direct the whole power of his intellectual being to striking it that spot. His intelligence seems the more remarkable to us of modern times because he was illiterate. We are told that Charlemagne tried to learn to write, 'keeping his tablets under the pillow of his couch, to practice on in his leisure hours. But he never succeeded very well, because he began too late in life.' Sivaji, however, never began at all, and worked out his plans in military tactics and administrative policy without the help of books or of others' experience.

There was always about him something that suggested the poet. Not only in his insatiable zest for life, not only in the quickness and almost playful inquisitiveness of his mind, but also in the humour with which he tempered his shrewdness and the generosity with which he softened his revenge. In battle he treated prisoners of war with the utmost humanity, sparing the com-

mon soldiers and dismissing the officers with gifts. He never plundered shrines, even Muhammadan ones, and his chivalry to women (both Hindu and Muhammadan) was the wonder and admiration even of his enemies. His manner of avenging himself on his enemies was often almost in the form of a joke. We have the story of how he entered Poona when that town was held by the Mughal general. He and a few picked companions in disguise joined a wedding procession, went through the gates, and that night attacked the commander in chief in his bedroom. On another occasion, when he and his son were prisoners at Agra, they managed to escape in huge baskets of sweetmeats. When he found himself hotly pursued, he shaved off his beard and moustache, smeared himself with ashes, and put on the disguise of a sannyasi, his gems and gold coins he crammed into the hollow core of his staff. Did ever hero furnish the ballad makers of his country with more picturesque material? He lived dangerously, yet always with an air of careless mockery that seemed utterly to disarm danger.

Sivaji well knew how to bide his time. Not until the death of Dadaji did he begin to put his plans into action. He was then twenty years of age. First occupying a few half ruined forts in the Maratha country, which were nominally the property of the King of Bijapur, he gradually gathered around him a band of carefully-chosen followers. Much of his success in life was due to his unerring instinct in judging character,

and in knowing how to select men on whom he could depend utterly. He then brought all his father's western estate under his control. From this base he continued his annexations of forts and cities, and his work of organizing the government for five years.

By this time he had conquered the whole of the Konkan, and felt strong enough to threaten the king of Bijapur openly. The latter sent against him his most experienced general, Afzal Khan. Sivaji, knowing how fatal would be failure in the first encounter, decided to use guile instead of open fighting, and arranged for a private interview with the Muhammadan general. *Afzal Khan for his part had come to the same decision,* and laid his plans to entrap Sivaji. When they met, therefore, the question was not whether there would be a murder, but which one would be the victim. Sivaji, who came only to Afzal Khan's shoulder and was of much slighter build, was nevertheless protected by a coat of the finest chain-armour under his long linen robe, and by the terrible 'tiger's claws', sharp steel hooks fastened to the fingers, which lay concealed in the palm of his left hand. It is generally agreed that Afzal Khan made the first attack, and not until then did Sivaji plunge the tiger's claws into his body, and bring him bleeding and dying to the ground. Premeditated though the murder was, Sivaji was but obeying the law of self-preservation contained in the motto of a certain character in American fiction, 'Do unto the other fellow as he would do unto you—and do it first.' The death of the

Bijapur general was followed by the extermination of his army, an achievement which raised the enthusiasm of the Marathas to the highest pitch. That their band of raw, untrained troops should have crushingly defeated a division of the disciplined Bijapur army was almost incredible. New faith, new hope, new confidence beat in hearts that had almost ceased to respond to faith or hope. On the other hand, a new terror came into the minds of his enemies. They began to have the same feeling with regard to Sivaji that Napoleon's enemies had when they spoke of him as a 'one hundred thousand man', because they feared the effect of his enthusiasm on the battlefield more than an extra hundred thousand men.

This victory was the signal for the king of Bijapur to call in the help of Shaista Khan the Mughal emperor's general, against Sivaji. Success at first favoured Shaista Khan. He captured several important forts and cities, among them Poona. Then came Sivaji's episode of entering the city in disguise with a wedding procession, and making his way to the very bedroom of the general, who jumped out of the window to save his life, but lost one of his fingers by a sword-cut. His son and many retainers were killed, but Sivaji and all but a few of his band escaped safely. No military advantage was gained by this attack, but its daring and cunning enormously enhanced Sivaji's prestige and popularity among his followers, and increased his enemies' terror of him.

Soon after, he made one of his most wonderful

raids when he looted the city of Surat, a possession of the Emperor Aurangzib. The wealth of this city was enormous, yet no provision had been made for defending it. On hearing of Sivaji's approach, the entire population of 200,000 (with the exception of the English and Dutch merchants) fled from the place. The invader was unable to take the Dutch and English factories, which were well armed, but his army gave itself up to four days and nights of looting the rest of the city. According to the account of the English merchants, Sivaji 'scorned to carry away anything but gold, silver, pearls, diamonds, and such precious ware'. They also tell us, 'Sivaji is so famously infamous for his notorious thefts that report hath made him an airy body and added wings, or else it were impossible he could be at so many places, as he is said to be at, all at one time'.

Alongside of this, by way of contrast, we may put the description of Sivaji, written by an Englishman who visited him some years later at the fort of Raigarh: 'I pictured him in my imagination as a man with the face of a devil, surrounded by fierce followers with drawn swords, ready to execute his cruel mandates. . . . The real Sivaji, pointed out to us by our Brahmin guide, was very different from the creature of our imagination. He was seated on a stone bench by a well, with no escort near him, and was talking pleasantly with the women who came to draw water, and asking them kindly about their husbands and brothers. The children at the well

came up to him fearlessly with smiling faces, and he was giving them fruit and sweets that he had brought with him for the purpose. We had never seen a face more expressive of kindness or more attractive. Whatever he might be to the foes of his nation and religion, he was evidently the father of his people.

It was ten years since Sivaji had openly taken the field, and his exploits now drew the attention of the emperor at Delhi. Aurangzib decided to send against him his ablest general, Jai Singh, supported by the most experienced officers at his command. So vigorously did Jai Singh press the siege of Purandar, that within three months Sivaji saw that he must come to terms. He surrendered a number of his forts, and offered to join the Mughal forces against the king of Bijapur. Then Jai Singh persuaded him to go to Delhi in person, to offer his services to the emperor.

If Aurangzib had accepted Sivaji as an ally, this might have been the turning point in his fortunes in the Deccan. But the court at Delhi, like many others had eyes only for visitors who wore handsome robes, were of impressive size and walked ponderously. In short, it knew a man of importance when it saw him. But the small, thin figure of Sivaji, moving with the lithe, quick grace of a panther, and bearing in dress and manner unmistakable signs of the rustic, seemed to it wholly contemptible. Introduced to the Court on an occasion when the arrangements were of more than usual elaborateness and splendour that he might be dazzled by its show

he was treated with marked discourtesy by the emperor. Such successes as Sivaji had won had not taught him humility, and, like all Marathas, he was by nature proud and high-spirited. From that moment he became the emperor's most deadly foe.

Aurangzib was not slow to recognize the signs of enmity, and took the precaution of making Sivaji and his son virtual prisoners in their quarters until he could make up his mind as to how to dispose of them. Sivaji was in a tight place—a very tight place—and well he knew it. But never did his wits serve him to better purpose. His first business was to disarm Aurangzib's suspicions. Under the plea that the climate was injuring the health of his followers, he obtained permission to send home most of those who had accompanied him. Aurangzib now felt that Sivaji was more than ever at his mercy. But shortly after, Sivaji and his son made their escape in sweetmeat baskets, and though all the resources of the empire were employed in the effort to recapture them, they managed, after many months, by many changes of disguise, and on some occasions by good-sized bribes, to reach home in safety.

The next two years were outwardly a time of comparative quiet. The king of Bijapur, who had acquired an immense respect for Sivaji's power, paid his former enemy a handsome tribute, and they treated one another with what diplomats would call distinguished consideration. Sivaji made the most of this breathing-space, in

preparation for the terrible trial of strength which he knew was to come.

This time of truce came to an end when Aurangzib made a secret attempt to seize Sivaji. Sivaji at once threw off all pretence, and boldly invaded Mughal territory, looting and plundering everywhere with the utmost fearlessness. We read that on one occasion he had twenty thousand sacks prepared for the plunder that he expected to carry away from a certain town. At another time he returned from an attack with three thousand ox-loads of plunder. His confidence in himself, as a result of these successes, was matched by the fresh enthusiasm of his army. At last he risked an open engagement with a division of the imperial army. It was brilliantly successful. From that moment Mughal prestige in the Deccan declined, and Sivaji's star was in the ascendant.

When he was forty-seven years old, Sivaji had himself crowned at Raigad as 'Padshaha of the Hindus'. Then for six years he gave himself, with all his restless energy and unflagging force, to conducting invasions, entering into negotiations with kings, and consolidating his kingdom. His most notable achievement during these years was the invasion of the Karnatic in the south.

Sivaji was one of those rare men who, in turning their hands to many different activities, show distinguished ability in all of them. With no training in administration or help from others, he constructed an admirable system of army organization and of government. His army was

no longer an undisciplined band of hillmen, but a thoroughly trained force, comprising both infantry and cavalry. In nothing did Sivaji show more unmistakably his genius than in making use of the most commonplace material. He took this handful of rough soldiers and shaped it into an army that was a miracle of precision. He took a group of petty States, in which religious feuds and oppression of the poor by those better off made life a misery, and by his protection and endowment of all religions, his care for the peasantry, and his even-handed justice to all, made it before his death a kingdom whose unity was based on contentment and toleration.

Then suddenly, in the midst of his dazzling successes, he died of what appeared at first a trifling injury, in his fifty-third year.

'What makes a fine life,' it has been said, 'is a great thought of youth realized in maturer years.' Sivaji's great thought of youth had moved before him all his life as a bright feather of flame, and when he was gone men saw that his dream had turned into reality. He had delivered his people from the Muslim rule and, far more than that, he had breathed into the souls of the Marathas his own passionate belief in their essential greatness, and his intensity made them believe in themselves. Instead of scattered and despised tribes living at the mercy of their invaders, lacking national unity and a national spirit, they had been welded into a nation, the best part of whose life, religion, duty, liberty and loyalty was bound up with the luminous ideal

created by Sivaji. Instead of a selfish and sordid struggle for existence, life had become to them a thing of high hope and deep spiritual significance.

It is of course, true that Sivaji's kingdom was lost within nine years of his death. It is true that his son, Sambaji, who succeeded him was a dismal failure. Yet the power passed to the line of Peshwas, or Prime Ministers, who built up the great Maratha Confederacy, which dominated India for the next hundred years, and still lives in a measure in that notable group of States in western India, comprising Indore Baroda Gwalior, Kolhapur, Dhar and Dewas.

Had Sivaji lived twenty years longer he would no doubt have consolidated his power and secured the permanence of his kingdom. But although the Maratha nation ceased to exist politically, it still lives spiritually. The pride and confidence in themselves that he created in his people, their proved capacity to take the position of leaders instead of underlings, their ardent patriotism, are proofs that although the things that Sivaji won by physical force have been lost to them, the things of the spirit that he won by the genius of his wit and vigour are forever theirs.

XIII. RAM MOHUN ROY

ALMOST all the biographies of this boy begin with his young manhood. The picture that they paint is one of a youth of astonishing independence of character. But we know that this independence was not acquired all at once. It was a thing of long, steady, patient growth and habit. We cannot ignore the years of his boyhood, which are the key to his whole life. And, although we are given very few facts for this period, from the record of his later life we can reconstruct much that went to the making of this brilliant mind in its early years.

First of all we find that he had an 'outdoor mind'. A recent essayist has divided the world into men of 'indoor minds', that is, men whose ideas are petty, narrow, morbid; and men of 'outdoor minds', who refuse to be held down by old superstition and narrow prejudice, because they have spent much of their time under the wide expanse of sky, and felt the great winds of heaven sweep through their souls.

This boy, later known to the world as Raja Ram Mohun Roy, was born about a hundred and eighty years ago, in a village of Bengal. His father came of the very high caste of orthodox Brahmins known as Kulins, and his mother of the extremely orthodox and pious sect known as

Shaktis In other words he was born into a family of persons with an extremely indoor type of mind. It was the very strictness of their orthodoxy that made them marry their son, when only twelve years of age, to a little girl, and on her death, shortly after to two other little girls. It is possible that, but for Ram Mohun Roy, such marriages would be more common than they are. It is certain that if he had kept the indoor habits of mind of his parents, Indian women would have waited much longer for a fearless championship of their cause.

What was it that gave this boy the strength to break away from the cramping ideas of the times? Undoubtedly he spent much time thinking in the open. His home was in a village in the Burdwan district and we can picture him as a little lad, spending hours beneath the trees in friendly intercourse with birds and animals. As he grew older we seem to see his deep-dreaming eyes drinking in the beauty of the broad plains and rivers and palms of his native land and drawing into his soul the strength of their ancient peace. Something of the hurt of life which others felt must have filled his heart with brooding thoughts and led him later to attack the social system that was the cause of their misery.

His father, who recognized his son's unusual gifts, supervised his early education and after a few years sent him to the city of Patna at that time a famous seat of Muhammadan learning. Bengal being under Muhammadan rule knowledge of Persian and Arabic was at

that time, the surest passport to position. At Patna, Ram Mohun studied the Koran in the



original Arabic, and he is said to have been especially drawn to the writings of the Sufi

Muhammadans a sect of mystics and never through the rest of his life to have lost the impress of their teachings

When only sixteen years old he was given the opportunity to show something of the martyr spirit that afterwards characterised him. It was after his return from Patna. He was noticed dry after dry absorbed in writing something. His father searched for the papers and found that they were a treatise against the superstitions of Hinduism. So bitter was the dispute that followed that the father ordered the boy to leave his house. He went without a word of sympathy from his mother yet both felt deeply the hurt that each gave the other. It is only those we deeply love who have the power to wound us. Ram Mohun Roy though so young was beginning to know already the loneliness of independent souls. And his mother shutting fast her indoor mind refused to forgive the lad who so sorely needed understanding and sympathy.

Nothing daunted however Ram Mohun Roy made this an opportunity for a journey of one thousand miles on foot crossing the Himalayas to visit Tibet for the study of Buddhism. Even here his principles got him into trouble for he so incurred the displeasure of the Lama worshippers by his protest against their creed that he with difficulty escaped from death. A cynical writer has spoken of America as the country where by the blessing of God we have three unspeakably precious things—freedom of speech freedom of conscience and the prudence never to practise

either of them. Ram Mohun Roy was never in the least troubled by this kind of prudence. Every man of an indoor mind that he met was a challenge to him. Such men might hate him, but they could not but respect him for his courage.

When he reached the age of twenty, his father recalled him and restored him to his favour. But the young man's boldness in arguing with the Brahmins against their superstitions, and his attacks upon their custom of burning widows, made his father pretend to withdraw his support from him while however, secretly providing him with money. It was not until he was twenty-two that he began to study English. To this he applied himself so steadily that he acquired the ability to speak and write it with admirable ease. He also mastered Greek, Hebrew and Latin. It is difficult to tell where he found the time for all this study, for he obtained on his return home the position of Dewan, or Collector of Revenue, in the East India Company's Service work of a very exacting and fatiguing nature.

His father's death and soon after the death of his two brothers brought into his hands a large amount of money. His mother's orthodoxy led her to persecute her son, by bringing law suits against him to deprive him of his money on the ground of his refusal to conform to Hindu ceremonies and forms. In these attempts she was defeated but she long retained a spirit of great bitterness towards Ram Mohun Roy. With the wonderful charity which was a characteristic of his outdoor mind he never failed in affection

towards her, and one of his biographers states that 'it was with a glistening eye that he told us that she had repented of her conduct towards him'. 'Ram Mohun,' she said to him before she set out on her last pilgrimage to Jaggernaut, where she died a year later, 'you may be right. But I am a weak woman, and am grown too old to give up these observances which are a comfort to me.'

The work that he did in the Revenue Department was extremely arduous, but it was not allowed to crowd out his search for truth. His evenings of scanty leisure were given up, not to meeting men who agreed with his views and with whom it would, therefore, have been pleasant to hold conversation, but to discussions with those of various sects among the Hindus, Muhammadans and Jainas.

By the time he was forty he was ready to begin his life-work. He retired from government service, and the next year published his translation of the Vedanta and founded the Atmiya Sabha. This was an association of men of his own age, who banded themselves together for the purpose of spreading religious truth and promoting free discussion of theological subjects. During the next five years he wrote and published prodigiously. The greater part of his fortune was spent in this work, for he distributed free the books that he wrote. Many of these books were translations of the Upanishads, sacred Hindu books forming part of the Vedas. During his study of these ancient books, Ram Mohun Roy was

astonished to find that they taught none of the superstitions of the Hindus of his day, but proclaimed one God with a holy and spiritual nature, the belief at which he himself had arrived. He sent broadcast translations of these books with his notes upon them, and brought upon himself a perfect storm of opposition.

Almost all his life he had to fight, and the strain of it must have told on him, but his biographers tell us of his serenity in all these experiences. Others might grow heated and angry, but, while answering with great energy, he never was fretted or vexed, irritated or sore. He met all taunts and reproaches with calmness and evenness of temper. He might have said, as did Frederick William Faber under similar provocation, 'One thing, by God's grace, you will not provoke us to, and that is one really uncharitable thought, or one really unkind word.'

With certain great movements and reforms Ram Mohun Roy's name will always be associated. There is no room in this brief story of his life to tell all that he accomplished, for his biography is an epitome of the stir in every part of the life of his day—religious, social, political, literary, and educational. It will be sufficient to mention three of his greatest achievements.

The first was his contribution to the cause of English education. He was the first to help Alexander Duff the Scottish missionary, to start an English school in Calcutta and he soon after started and supported an English school of his own in another part of the town. When Lord Mac-

aulay wished to make English the medium of instruction in Indian schools, Ram Mohun Roy, though one of the finest Persian and Sanskrit scholars of his day, threw the whole weight of his powerful influence on the side of English. We must remember that at that time it was not a question of education in the vernaculars versus that in English, but education in the Indian classics versus the English classics. There was then no vernacular literature worth the name, and Ram Mohun Roy felt the need of Western science in the intellectual development of India. He saw, too, that literature and philosophy were waiting for the stimulus of fresh currents of life. How wise and clear his vision was is proved by the new impulse given to vernacular literature, resulting in the modern renaissance.

Then came his founding at the age of fifty-four, of the Brahmo Samaj which means literally, The Society of the Worshipers of the One True God. This was the work to which his whole life tended. Its greatness and significance lay in the fact that it came as a reforming movement at a moment when Hinduism had sunk to cold formalism as in the age before Christ. His own ardent spirit attracted those of like mind to him, and the movement he set on foot has had a good influence upon Hinduism.

Next in importance was his work in the field of social reform especially in bringing about the abolition of *suttee*. At the age of thirty-seven he had witnessed the *suttee* of his brother's wife a scene which haunted him till the day of his death.

The girl had at first submitted to the rite, but when the flames actually reached her, she tried to escape, and was prevented by the priest and relations, who forced her down on the funeral pyre with long bamboo poles. This cruel sight caused Ram Mohun Roy to take a solemn vow to devote the rest of his life to fighting the custom. It is impossible to read unmoved his words of generous indignation against the low regard in which women were held, and the sufferings they were forced to endure. His reverence and admiration for their devotion and firmness, and his insistence on their right to legal protection and to education, found expression in burning words of pleading. In his attack on the ancient custom of suttee he encountered powerful opposition from orthodox Hindus, even though he was able to prove from ancient Hindu scriptures that it was not anywhere enjoined as a duty. After ten years of agitation he had the satisfaction of seeing Lord William Bentinck, the Governor-General, abolish suttee by an official decree. But a petition against this was presented by the inhabitants of Calcutta. Finding how determined was the opposition, and learning that an appeal was to be made to Parliament, Ram Mohun Roy decided to go to England to plead the cause of his countrywomen in person. It was the first time that a Hindu had ever visited Europe. This was when he was fifty-seven years old. He had the great satisfaction, two years later, of being present in Parliament when the appeal of his enemies

against the abolition of suttee was rejected by that body.

During the two years he spent in England and France he was everywhere received with such honours as are awarded only to ambassadors of the highest rank. But praise and honour moved him now as little as calumny and opposition had moved him in earlier years. He was unfailing, however, in his appreciation of the kindness of the friends he everywhere met. It is a pleasure to think that he whose life had been one long battle for others was permitted two years of quiet happiness before the end came. He never again saw India, for, after a brief illness, he died in Bristol, where loving hands buried him in a quiet, beautiful spot. His body lies in England, but his soul—his great, unconquerable soul—is marching on in India.

XIV DAYANAND

OVER a hundred years ago in February 1824, there came into the world a boy who was destined to be the bringer of a great spiritual message to his people. Mulshankar or Dayanand, as he is better known to us was brought up in Morvi a town of Kathiawar in a home typical of Brahmin homes the country over. He was subjected to influences precisely the same as those of thousands of the other boys of his class. But from the first forces were at work within him which fitted him for the special mission he was to fulfil.

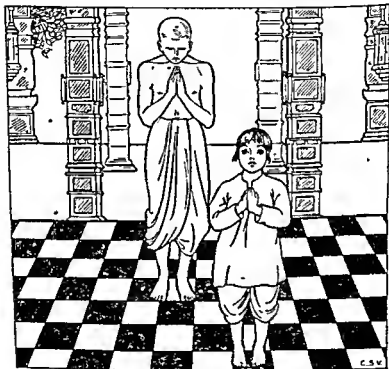
Ruskin has said that the first five lines of a sketch determine what the picture shall be. It is not too much to suppose that the first dozen years of Dayanand's life were decisive ones in his character. From a father who was a Brahmin of the most rigidly orthodox pattern he inherited a character of great strength. This was tempered by the strain of sweetness and gentleness that he received from his mother. Up to his fourteenth year his discipline was chiefly conspicuous for its severity. Not only did he begin the study of Sanskrit at the age of five and receive the investiture of the sacred thread at the age of eight but he also shared with his father fasts and penances beyond those customary

for his age, and became a devout worshipper of Siva.

This was the usual training, though intensified, of other Hindus, and might have been expected to result in an ordinary type of character. But Dayanand's destiny was to save him from mediocrity, and in this his character played a vital part. He might have been so lacking in desire and ambition as to evolve into a thin and meagre personality. But this boy had a heart and mind that made an unusually insistent demand upon life. He might have been one whose aims and ambitions, while strong and intense, were only commonplace. But the glory of his life was that his demand on life was a demand for character. Prayer to him was evidently more than a mere form, and fasting more than a ceremony. The strong will which was his by nature seems to have been an inwrought fire and force, impelling him to give more time and appetite to spiritual things than to bodily satisfactions. Two things resulted from the intensity with which he gave himself to religion: a strong, unappeasable longing and thirst for truth, and freedom from fear of man and of public opinion. As he came to realize afterwards, his praying was not perfect, but at least it made him aware of the reality of God. Young as he was, he had a spiritual instinct that hungered after God, and that made God the object of his aim, his aspirations, his ambition.

Thus he came to a momentous night in his fourteenth year. It was the time of the Siva-ratri fast—a thirty-six hours of fast—against

which his tender-hearted mother protested for one so young, but upon which his father insisted. As the evening set in, father and son repaired to the temple of Siva outside the village, where,



with other devotees, they were to keep the fast by staying awake all night and repeating prayers before the image. Only until midnight, however, did most of the company succeed in keeping awake. A few alone remained awake the whole

from refusing the patience and courage needed to give them a fitting answer

While thus brooding over the future the death of a dearly loved sister, when he was at the impressionable age of sixteen brought upon him a nameless dread. Once more he found himself unsure in face of the mystery of death. Three years later the depths of his nature were stirred by the death of a favourite uncle. His parents alarmed by his grief but having little understanding of its nature planned for him a marriage with a young girl of another priestly family. But for five long years the conviction had been forming itself in Dayanand's mind that God had a place and a use for him in the world. He must therefore refuse to be bound by the circumstances of his upbringing, the expectation of his friends, the prospect of a comfortable existence and must shake the dust of his present life from his feet. The only course that presented itself was that of running away. At nineteen then he found himself alone in the world with nothing more to guide him than an inner compulsion that seemed like the voice in Kipling's poem the Explorer

A voice as bad as conscience
 Ringing interminable changes
 Oo one everlasting whisper
 Day and night repeated so—
 Something hidden go and find it
 Something lost behind the ranges
 Lost and waiting for you Go!

He did not know that fifteen years of wandering lay between him and the finding of that

‘something’ hidden’ If he had been able to look into the future, he might have been tempted to look upon them as time wasted But they were years in which the slow and deep process of education, of enlightenment, of spiritual liberation, were going on in the secret chambers of his heart If he was to bring a vitalizing force into his country’s life, he must himself be vitalized And for this, isolation was necessary—in isolation that would give him the secret of concentration During the years which Dayanand spent in the practice of *yoga* (meditation) in the study of the Vedas, and in prayer regarding the work he was to do, the sensitive surfaces of his heart were absorbing the life-giving powers which were to charge his message with such energy

His long apprenticeship ended at last in finding, at Muttra, a remarkable blind teacher named Swami Virjanand It was a memorable meeting At last Dayanand found himself in the presence of one who both loved and understood him In Virjanand he found one who had the same indomitable spirit of opposition to all who enjoy mediocrity because of its safety, or cling to things as they are from motives of self interest, the same sublime sense of God as a spiritual being the same belief in the uselessness of attempting to picture Him by means of symbols and forms the same passionate love of truth In spite of his blindness, Virjanand had, by force of concentration memorized so large a portion of Sanskrit literature that he was, admittedly, the most learned religious teacher of the time in that part of India His

mind was steeped in the doctrines of the ancient Vedas. From him Dayanand eagerly drank in the interpretation which seemed to answer so satisfactorily the questions that he had carried with him during the long years of his quest. Virjanand was the severest of masters, but no severity could drive from his side his ardent disciple. For two and a half years Dayanand gave himself to learning all that his master could teach him. When, having completed his education, he brought Virjanand the usual present or offering, he received what must have been to him an accolade. 'If you would pay me an offering,' said the blind teacher, 'let it be this. Give the knowledge of the ancient religion to the Motherland.'

Dayanand's long years of thinking resulted at last in the domination of his mind by one idea: 'Reform the abuses of the present by returning to the past.' He had become deeply convinced that the Hinduism of his day was clearly opposed to the Vedas and the Hinduism of Vedic times, which dated back at least 2,000 years. To reform their religion, he thought Hindus must go back to the purer form it had once worn.

At the age of forty, then, he had come into the possession of new standards, and was judging his world by them. He had come to believe profoundly in the conquering power of a purified Hinduism. But it could be made pure, he knew, only by a great disruptive process. Would he succeed in breaking the old forms, or be broken by them, in the work he felt himself called to do? He may well have paused to ask himself that

question. Only courage of the most selfless kind would have dared to challenge the powerful opposition of the orthodox Hinduism of his day.

With all the courage at his command, however, it was long before he saw results. Voltaire wrote in his old age: 'I now perceive that we must still wait. . . . One day it cannot be but that good men will win their cause; but before that glorious day arrives how many disappointments have we to undergo, how many dark persecutions?' The first years of Dayanand's mission were a failure, but he doubtless came to regard them as an illuminating failure. He spent them partly in writing his great work, *Satyarth Prakash* ('The True Exposition'), in which he summarised his principal teachings. He also gave much time to preaching at the great bathing festivals in North India, and holding discussions with Hindu scholars. Something of the power of the man is revealed to us in his keen face, with its intelligent eyes and firm, well-set mouth. He possessed a winning and magnetic personality, and commanded the interested attention and admiration of crowds whenever he spoke. Most of his discussions were in Sanskrit, and his unrivalled knowledge of the Vedas gave him an enormous advantage over all his opponents. But few accepted his teaching.

And there was a weak spot in his armour. He claimed to interpret the Vedas not as they had always been interpreted, but according to his own views. This was the logical outcome of his

protest against the unquestioning and uncritical acceptance of all Hindu writings, and a noble assertion of his right to think for himself. But, unfortunately, he was unwilling to grant the same freedom to others. Even those who had taken precisely his attitude towards orthodox Hinduism were not recognized by him unless they also accepted his view of the authority of the Vedas. The next few years took him on a short visit to Bengal, where he met the leaders of the Brahmo Samaj, among them Keshab Chander Sen, whom he greatly admired. But strongly as he felt the attraction of Brahmoism, and deeply as it influenced him, it was impossible for him to make common cause with it. Equally impossible was it for him to join a similar body, which he found a little later in Bombay—the Prarthna Samaj. That he was not slow to learn, however, is shown by the fact that, at Keshab Chander Sen's suggestion, he gave up the use of Sanskrit and adopted Hindi (which at once greatly increased his audience), and that he followed the plan of organization of the Brahmo and Prarthna Samajs in drawing up the plan for the Arya Samaj.

He was fifty-one years old when he founded the Arya Samaj in Bombay. It met with little success there, and there was little to indicate that it was destined to become 'by far the most powerful indigenous reforming movement in the North of India'. It is probable that Dayanand often found himself wondering if it was worth while to continue his lonely battle for truth. He never lacked the courage to tell an unpopular

truth, and this was perhaps what gave him his power.

So far there was little to show for his labour. But the years of success were at hand. For two years after organizing his society he remained in Bombay. Then he went on a visit to the Punjab, where he at once met with an astonishing response from the younger generation. Fourteen years had gone by since he had taken leave of his teacher, Virjanand, and he was now in his fifty-fourth year. Six years of life were all that remained to him for completing the foundation of the great Arya Samaj. Tireless journeys from town to town in the Punjab and the United Provinces, for the purpose of organizing Samajs, occupied much of his time, and he gave himself to writing, lecturing and various forms of philanthropic work. But perhaps his most lasting service was that of founding schools. He had come to believe that the educational system of India was too foreign to meet the needs of her youth. He also saw the necessity of training men to propagate his views. Therefore, his plan was to found schools on the model of the past where pupils would be taught the Vedas and steeped in the literature and culture of ancient times.

Hardly more than a beginning was made before his death, at the age of fifty-nine. But his followers, understanding his mind, immediately founded the Anglo-Vedic College at Lahore in his memory. Here the study of the Vedas was combined with the study of English literature

and Western science. The college has had an enviable record. Its professors, who serve for a mere pittance, have acquired the habit of refusing alluring offers to go elsewhere, and its educational standing in the Punjab is very high. It has also created an atmosphere of Hindu nationalism. But, from the first there were many among the Arya Samajists who felt that science and English literature were given too prominent a part in the curriculum, and they were responsible for starting another college, the Gurukula, at Hardwar. Here the simplicity and even austerity of the ancient schools of India are revived, and, while Western science and literature are not excluded, they occupy a secondary place to Sanskrit and the training of moral character according to Vedic ideals. Many Vedic schools for boys and girls are now scattered all over the Punjab, and there is a flourishing boarding school for girls at Jullundur.

For nearly half a century the Arya Samaj has made its influence felt, and increasingly felt, in the life of India.

No past, however glorious, can serve as a guide to the present or a key to the future. Present-day problems demand new solutions. But while seeking to preserve all that is right and beautiful in the past we should also see what is the next step and be ready to take it. In the life-history of Dayanand we see a picture of how the human spirit moves toward the luminous image of truth beckoning from the horizon. It is for us also to follow the gleam.

XV TORU DUTT

THERE are two kinds of people in the world. There are those who live a drab sort of existence, who have no resources of mind or heart, who are so poor in thoughts that, as Robert Louis Stevenson says, they do not have so much as two ideas to rub against each other while waiting for a train, and who cannot bear to be alone. Then there is the other kind of person reminding one of a fire opal, through which glows a soft radiance. Such people never lose their wonder and interest in life; they never fail to find beauty in the commonplace and joy in every-day happenings, and never cease to draw others within the charmed circle of their radiance. These are the people who have found that the deepest springs of happiness lie in their own hearts; that the kingdom of God is within them. They have found the secret of an inner spiritual power, which transforms and transfigures their world. They have become so interested in living that they have forgotten to be interested in themselves. And no people in the world are so interesting as those who have forgotten themselves.

'A few days ago I wrote Toru Dutt from a garden house in Bengal on a May morning forty-nine years ago. 'We went to see my grandfather in his new garden. My uncle gave me a bouquet

Among the flowers were two I did not recognize, but as soon as I smelt them their

Odour, like a key,
Turned noiselessly in memory's wards
To set a thought of sorrow free

"Why, grandmamma," exclaimed I, "this flower used to grow in your old house at Connaghur, near your seven Hindu temples!" She was astounded. "Can you remember it all, dear?" quoth she. "Why, you could not have been more than four years old when you last came to see us at Connaghur, sixteen years ago!" I was myself surprised at the power of the fragrance of the flower. I did not even care to look at first at the flower, never recognized it even and when I smelt it nonchalantly, the whole picturesque scene of Connaghur came upon me suddenly and vividly, like a flash of lightning—the seven temples on whose pinnacles the parrots used to build, the old half ruined house, the vast and placid Ganges flowing smoothly by—I saw it all in a moment!"

Just after she and her parents and sister had returned from England she wrote, 'All at home were so glad to see us back. Old Maj our favourite cat, is as pretty and well mannered as ever!' 'We are very comfortable here in our own garden house. Though it is December now, there are roses, hibiscus, marigold asters, etc. blowing plentifully. Our tanks look very pretty with white water lilies and blood red lotus.'

'Jeunette and Gentile (her horses) are going

on capitally well I wish you could see them, so sleek and fine, with their black manes and their slender black feet, they are dark bay in colour, not a single white hair have they, and they are so beautiful! Sometimes I take them out to grass, myself, early in the morning, they never misbehave when with me, neither do they so with anybody They know my voice and even my step from another's, Gentile whinnies with pleasure and Jeunette turns her soft dark eyes wistfully towards me, and pricks up her delicate small ears'

On another occasion she wrote 'I have just finished *La Femme dans l'Inde Antique* I heartily recommend it to you You would then see how grand, how sublime, how pathetic, our legends are The wifely devotion that an Indian wife pays to her husband, her submission to him even when he is capricious and exacting, her worship of him "as the god of her life," as old Spenser has it The legend of Nala and Damayanti, that of Savitri, who followed "Yama" even to the lower regions and by her wisdom, her constancy, her love, made him give back to her her dead husband alive, the legend of Sacountala and Douchmanta, that of Queen Gandhari, who, because her husband was blind, put a blind on her own eyes, thus renouncing to enjoy a privilege which nature had denied her husband "Lest I come to reproach my husband for his misfortune" said she And last but not least the grand legend of Ram and Sita

'I am quite as rich as you are dear! For I

ished was her cousin, Mr Romesh Chunder Dutt. Her father, Govin Chunder Dutt, together with his three brothers, and the wives of all of them, became Christians under extraordinary circumstances. Her mother, who had a singularly attractive character, exercised great influence over her children, and gave them that deep love for Indian history and literature which so moulded their imagination. Toru was the youngest of the family, the two others being a brother and a dearly loved sister, who died at an early age. But it was to her father that she was most deeply indebted. A poet in English of no mean ability, he had an exquisite literary taste and trained his children with the utmost care. She wrote once to a friend 'Without Papa I should never have known good poetry from bad, but he used to take such pains with us when we were quite little ones. I wonder what I should have been without my father, nothing very enviable or desirable, I know.' Toru was his special delight, and he has written of the pleasure it gave him especially in her later years, to study Sanskrit, French, or German with her. Her memory, he testified, was remarkable. Equally remarkable was the thoroughness with which she studied, never letting a difficulty in her reading pass without consulting dictionaries, lexicons, or encyclopedias. Sometimes there would be dispute between them as to the meaning of a sentence or phrase and they would lay a wager. Almost always Toru would prove to be right. But when she lost a smile would spread

over her face, and she would pat her father's cheek, quoting Mrs Browning's lines, 'Ah, my gossip—you are older, and more learned, and a man'



When Toru was thirteen, she accompanied her father mother and sister on a trip to Europe

It is interesting to speculate whether her genius would have blossomed as it did without the powerful stimulant of the new life that now opened before her. It was the first time (1869) that Bengali ladies had ever visited Europe. They first spent a few months at Nice, in the south of France, where Toru and Aru attended a French school, the only one they ever attended. Then followed a few months in Paris, a year in London, and then two years at Cambridge. It was a full, eager life that they lived in England. Music, theatres, lectures at Cambridge, friendships with men and women of distinction and culture, made this the richest period in their lives. It was the time of the Franco-German War, and perhaps the most vivid emotion experienced by Toru during this time was the passion of sympathy she felt for France.

At last the three happy years came to an end, and the family returned to India. A year later, Aru, the beloved sister, died of consumption and three years later Toru followed her, stricken down by the same disease. Someone has suggested that she heard, as Lowell surmises that Keats did, a voice urging, 'What thou doest, do quickly.' Certainly it was a wonderful blossoming time that these four years showed. Along with the study of Sanskrit, which she now began with her father, she wrote with great energy, feeling, perhaps, the need of something to fill the gap left by Aru's death. The only one of her books to be published before her death was *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields*, a translation of

166 French poems into English. It was received with astonishment, few believing at first that this was the work of so young a girl and of an Indian girl. Reviewers paid it the highest praise, one critic going so far as to say that Toru had caught so perfectly the form as well as the spirit of the original that, 'if modern French literature were entirely lost, it might not be found impossible to reconstruct a great number of poems from this Indian version'. Such unstinted praise as she received from critics of the highest rank in India, England, and France might well have turned her head. But never was genius more unconscious of its greatness. 'I am not vain yet,' she wrote to a friend in England, 'but I am afraid I shall soon be, with all the praises showered on me!'

But great as was the success of the *Sheaf*, her title to fame rests on the books that were discovered after her death. Two very remarkable romances, one in English (unfinished), entitled *Bianca, or the Young Spanish Maiden*, and a complete French novel, *Le Journal de Mademoiselle d'Arvers*, are as astonishing as any of the other work of this marvellous child.

All of these are books that we might have expected from an Englishwoman or a Frenchwoman. The work which has most endeared her to India, however, and on which her fame chiefly rests, is her *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan*, also found after her death. It contains only seven out of the nine episodes that she planned. They are taken from the *Mahabharata*

and the *Ramayana* and are based partly on one year's study of Sanskrit partly on the lore of India with which her mother had filled her mind from babyhood. When I hear my mother chant in the evening the old lays of our country I almost always weep she once wrote to a friend. The same emotion that swayed her heart while listening sways ours while reading these tender exquisitely simple poems.

Mr Edmund Gosse has written of her. It is impossible to exaggerate what we have lost in the premature death of Toru Dutt. Literature has no honours which need have been beyond the reach of a girl who at the age of twenty-one had produced so much of lasting worth. Her courage and fortitude were worthy of her intelligence. Among the last words recorded of celebrated people that which her father has recorded— It is only physical pain which makes me cry —is not the least remarkable or the least significant of strong character. When the history of English literature comes to be written there is certain to be a page dedicated to this fragile blossom of song.

It was a life of loving beauty burning itself out as a spendthrift with a soul of flame so steadfast and so careless of itself giving its life away. The girlhood of India today brings a special tribute of admiration and affection to the dear memory of Toru Dutt.

XVI GOPAL KRISHNA GOKHALE

THOUSANDS of boys to day are beginning life under much the same circumstances as this boy a son of Maharashtra, who was born not quite sixty years ago. What differentiated him from the thousands of others among whom he grew up was a certain mysterious spark, an incentive of the spirit that drove him out to difficult accomplishments to anything rather than ease.

Gopal Krishna Gokhale was born in the Chiplun Taluka in the Ratnagiri District. He spent his early years in Kagal and Kolhapur, and his years of schooling in Bomhay, but the city with which his name is most often associated is Poona the centre of so much selfless work for India. His family was poor, but of this the little Gopal was at first unconscious absorbed as he was in the important occupations of games of marbles kite flying leap frog and the innumerable other businesses of childhood. But the death of his father when the boy was twelve years old brought home the fact of poverty more sharply and made the problem of his education an anxious one. Thanks however, to the self sacrificing help of his older brother, he was able to continue his studies without interruption.

During these years of boyhood and youth

human welfare in other lands set him trying to discover what could be done to improve his own. And then there was his deep love of fine literature. It was this that gave him his wonderful mastery of English. How thorough were his methods is shown by his statement, that he memorized whole speeches from the English classics for the sake of their style. He had, indeed, a marvellous memory, which he carefully cultivated, and which was to be of the greatest service to him in public life later on.

We feel that he was one who did each day's work so perfectly that it needed not to be done over again. But this carefulness of detail was not allowed to smother the pure flame of his love of learning. It gave him mental concentration which made his work easier, but it took only second place in the programme. The first was given to thinking. He read much but he thought more.

At eighteen he stood at the parting of the ways as thousands of young men are standing to day. He had been granted the B A degree of the University of Bombay, and at this early age must choose his life's work. He had first thought of the law, then of engineering, and even of borrowing money and going to England to prepare for the Indian Civil Service. But after a few weeks of indecision, he quietly turned away from all other prospects and joined the Deccan Education Society as a life member. This meant that he pledged himself to teach in the schools of the society for twenty years,

He gave a large part of his time to lecturing on behalf of the society and collecting funds, as well as to the arduous task of organization. As fellow of the Bombay University he had an influential share in shaping its educational policy. He also edited the quarterly journal of the *Sarvajanik Sabha*, which is described as 'remarkable for its intelligent, thorough-going and outspoken discussions of the important public questions of the day, and its capable representation of the popular attitude towards them'. Later he became editor of the English-Marathi paper, the *Sudharak*, or Reformer.

At the age of thirty-one he was summoned to England to give witness before the Royal Commission on Indian Expenditure, on which occasion, thanks to his thorough mastery of the subject, he acquitted himself most creditably. At the age of thirty-four he became a member of the Bombay Legislative Council, and two years later of the Supreme Legislative Council, where he made his mark by his exact knowledge and outspoken fearlessness. Thus his life was not of cloistered remoteness, but one that brought him in contact with actualities and put him at grips with vital problems. So he was being prepared for his thirteen years of wider service. Then once more the voice that twenty years before had bidden him enter the service of the Deccan Education Society, now bid him leave that work for something harder. In his reply to the farewell address presented to him by the students of Ferguson College, he said:

'Here I am with a settled position in this college and having for my colleagues men with whom it is a pleasure and a privilege to work, and whose generosity in overlooking my many faults and magnifying any little service I may have rendered, has often touched me deeply. And yet I am giving up all this to embark on the stormy and uncertain sea of public life. But I hear within me a voice which urges me to take this course, and I can only ask you to believe me when I say that it is purely from a sense of duty to the best interests of our country, that I am seeking this position of greater freedom and not necessarily of less responsibility. Public life in this country has few rewards and many trials and discouragements. The prospect of work to be done is vast, and no one can say what is on the other side—how all this work may end. But one thing is clear. Those who feel in the matter as I do must devote themselves to the work in a spirit of hope and faith and seek only the satisfaction which comes of all disinterested exertions.

By temperament Gokhale was little fitted for the part he was to play. His friends tell us that he was unusually sensitive to criticism, and was acutely tormented by false and uncharitable remarks. Since men in politics are always the target of criticism it is necessary to have either a thick skin or a high degree of selflessness in order to be perfectly indifferent to praise or blame. But to Gokhale's everlasting honour his sensitiveness did not lead him to play the coward. He put with all his heart the high

price that life expected of one who was to be reckoned among the truly great. He obeyed the great maxim, 'Always do what you are afraid to do.'

Most men who live under a government or a social system that grants them a fair degree of freedom and comfort, are apt to close their eyes conveniently to any hardship that that system of government or society may work to others. When to champion another's cause will bring upon them unpopularity and dislike, they are apt to say, 'Here am I, Lord, send some other man', but Gokhale was not one of these. He saw around him hundreds of men whose lives were a living illustration of the saying, 'To be ever safe is to be feeble'. Not 'Safety first', but 'Duty first', would be his motto in working against certain wrongs that he felt must be righted. There is room here for only the briefest mention of his activities. Among others were the elevation of the depressed classes, a scheme for the gradual introduction of free and compulsory education the introduction of university education on the most advanced Western lines, the reform of the budget so as to economize on military expenditure and to spend more on improving the economic condition of the people, the gradual attainment of self government within the Empire and the attempt to introduce legislation that would make the condition of Indians in South Africa more tolerable.

In all these projects he had to meet steady and at times fierce opposition. In few of them did he

meet with any appreciable measure of success. Nine years after his death men in legislatures to day are still re proposing most of his proposals. But they were a solid foundation, laid with far seeking intelligence, and upon them we may yet hope to see raised the superstructure of accomplishment.

Some idea of the spirit in which he worked may be gathered from a few extracts from his speeches. In urging administrative reform in 1902, he closed his address with these statesman like words

* No one denies that the difficulties of the position are great, no one expects radical or far reaching changes all in a day. What one regrets most, however, in the present system of administration is that it favours so largely a policy of mere drift. The actual work of administration is principally in the hands of the members of the Civil Service, who, taken as a body, are able and conscientious men, but none of them individually can command that prestige which is so essential for inaugurating any large schemes of policy involving a departure from the established order of things. The administrators, on the other hand who come out direct from England, command, no doubt, the necessary prestige, but their term of office being limited to five years, they have not the opportunity, even if they had the will to deal in an effective and thorough going manner with the deeper problems of the administration. The result is that there is an inveterate tendency to keep things merely going as though every one said to himself, 'This will last my time'. What the situation really demands is that a large and comprehensive scheme for the moral and material well being of the people should be chalked out with patient care and foresight, and then it should be firmly and steadily adhered to, and the progress made examined almost from year to year.

Again in 1906 he said :

The saddest part of the whole thing is that in spite of the superabundance of money in the exchequer and the resultant growth of administrative expenditure, the most pressing needs of the country in regard to the moral and material advancement of the people have continued for the most part unattended to, and no advantage of the financial position has been taken to inaugurate comprehensive schemes of State action for improving the condition of the masses.

All of his utterances make us feel a spiritual glow, a moral passion, which grow out of his sincerity and deep conviction.

Along with his public work Gokhale organized, during the last ten years of his life, a society based on the same principles, but comprising a wider field than the Deccan Education Society. This is the Servants of India Society, which has borne so honourable a record. Pledges taken by its members are much the same as those of the Deccan Education Society. It has succeeded in attracting a small but highly-trained group of men and women, whose life of service is based on loving self giving. Their careful research and study, each in some particular line, has made of them a group not only of specialists but of authorities on subjects political, industrial, social and educational. It is worth while reading the preamble to the rules of the society which Gokhale wrote, for it expresses in clearest terms what he felt was the heart of India's problem

From some time past the conviction has been forcing itself on many earnest and thoughtful minds that a stage has been reached in the work of nation building in India,

when for further progress the devoted labours of a specially trained agency, applying itself to the task in true missionary spirit, are required. The work that has been accomplished so far has indeed been of the highest value. The growth during the last fifty years of a feeling of common nationality, based on common traditions and ties common hopes and aspirations, and even common disabilities, has been most striking. The fact that we are Indians first and Hindus, Muhammadans and Parsees or Christians afterwards, is being realized in a steadily increasing measure, and the idea of a united and renovated India marching onwards to a place among the nations of the world worthy of her great past, is no longer a mere idle dream of a few imaginative minds but is the definitely accepted creed of those who form the brain of the community—the educated classes of the country. A creditable beginning has already been made in matters of education and of local self government, and all classes of the people are slowly but steadily coming under the influence of liberal ideas. The claims of public life are every day receiving wider recognition, and attachment to the land of our birth is growing into a strong and deeply cherished passion of the heart. The annual meetings of congresses and conferences, the work of public bodies and associations, the writings in the columns of the Indian press—all bear witness to the new life that is coursing in the veins of the people. The results achieved so far are undoubtedly most gratifying but they only mean that the jungle has been cleared and the foundations laid. The great work of rearing the superstructure has yet to be taken in hand and the situation demands on the part of workers devotion and sacrifices proportionate to the magnitude of the task.

Love of country must so fill the heart that all else shall appear as of little moment by its side. A fervent patriotism which rejoices at every opportunity of sacrifice for the land, a dauntless heart which refuses to be turned back from its object by difficulty or danger, a deep faith in the purpose of Providence which nothing can shake—equipped with these the worker must start on his mission and reverently seek the joy which comes of spending one's self in the service of one's country.

These words reveal Gokhale's intense conviction that, before there could be a better India, there must be a change in individual lives and hearts. The form of government, the institutions of society are external things. But what concerns a man's inner life, his spirit, his attitude,



his ideas, his ideals, these are the things that matter. He would say that no new machinery is needed, not even new masters, but a different spirit in the lives of men.

The supreme lesson of Gokhale's life, the lesson that he taught, not so much by words as by the way he lived, is that they who would serve their country must be willing, even as he was, to fall into the earth and die for the sake of bringing forth much fruit.